

Characteristics of collaborative community college/economic development organization  
partnerships: A multiple case study

by

Pamela Lane Stegeman

B.A., Hamilton College, 1985  
M.B.A., Cornell University, 1990

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

## **Abstract**

Inconsistent prosperity across the country and a dearth of skilled workers for new middle-skills jobs have led to a rise in the importance of local workforce development and a consistent talent pipeline for employers. Over the past few years, the availability of a skilled local workforce has become the top concern of business executives and relocation consultants when evaluating locations for company expansion and economic growth. With over half of all jobs in the U.S. middle-skills jobs, and community colleges the primary educators and trainers of middle-skills workers, the need to marry economic development activity and community colleges is becoming clear. Some areas recognized this need and have taken steps to bring these two important community development endeavors together. Certain forward-looking states have been successful at developing employer-specific training programs and have successfully merged them into their state economic development programs. In these programs, community colleges act as the delivery platforms across the state for these employer training programs.

On the local level, some economic development organizations (EDOs) and their local community colleges understand this need to deliver a consistent skilled workforce to business to build economic prosperity. These community colleges and EDOs work together to help local businesses grow and attract new business to expand or diversify the local economy. A number of researchers have examined the work between community colleges, EDOs, and local businesses to improve the local economy. Little has been done to understand what it takes for community colleges and EDOs to attract new businesses to an area.

The purpose of this study is to understand the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that have a proven track-record in attracting new businesses to their area. Understanding the elements of successful partnerships may help communities wishing

to expand their employer base and diversify their economy. This multiple case study examined community college/EDO partnerships using the lens of Kanter's (1994) critical success factors for collaborative partnerships to determine commonalities across the partnerships and elements of the community colleges that may have contributed to their success.

Participants in this study had a very consistent message on critical success factors for their productive, ongoing relationship: Work together across all critical areas of community development for the good of the community; communicate, collaborate, and trust the partner organization; build respect for and from your partner by delivering on promises, understanding your partner's struggles, and working in innovative ways that help the partnership deliver on its goals. The commonalities across the partnership in regards to these critical success factors suggest their importance in local business attraction efforts, but it also indicates these critical success factors stretch across all community college/EDO partners employing a variety of economic and community growth tactics, as the participants integrated business attraction efforts with other community development activities. Expanding this research to a broader group of partners across the United States in a quantitative study may help further distinguish the critical success factors in community college/EDO partnerships.

Characteristics of collaborative community college/economic development organization  
partnerships: A multiple case study

by

Pamela Lane Stegeman

B.A., Hamilton College, 1985  
M.B.A., Cornell University, 1990

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2021

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
Dr. Margaretta B. Mathis

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
Dr. Terry Calaway

# **Copyright**

© Pamela Lane Stegeman 2021.

## **Abstract**

Inconsistent prosperity across the country and a dearth of skilled workers for new middle-skills jobs have led to a rise in the importance of local workforce development and a consistent talent pipeline for employers. Over the past few years, the availability of a skilled local workforce has become the top concern of business executives and relocation consultants when evaluating locations for company expansion and economic growth. With over half of all jobs in the U.S. middle-skills jobs, and community colleges the primary educators and trainers of middle-skills workers, the need to marry economic development activity and community colleges is becoming clear. Some areas recognized this need and have taken steps to bring these two important community development endeavors together. Certain forward-looking states have been successful at developing employer-specific training programs and have successfully merged them into their state economic development programs. In these programs, community colleges act as the delivery platforms across the state for these employer training programs.

On the local level, some economic development organizations (EDOs) and their local community colleges understand this need to deliver a consistent skilled workforce to business to build economic prosperity. These community colleges and EDOs work together to help local businesses grow and attract new business to expand or diversify the local economy. A number of researchers have examined the work between community colleges, EDOs, and local businesses to improve the local economy. Little has been done to understand what it takes for community colleges and EDOs to attract new businesses to an area.

The purpose of this study is to understand the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that have a proven track-record in attracting new businesses to their area. Understanding the elements of successful partnerships may help communities wishing

to expand their employer base and diversify their economy. This multiple case study examined community college/EDO partnerships using the lens of Kanter's (1994) critical success factors for collaborative partnerships to determine commonalities across the partnerships and elements of the community colleges that may have contributed to their success.

Participants in this study had a very consistent message on critical success factors for their productive, ongoing relationship: Work together across all critical areas of community development for the good of the community; communicate, collaborate, and trust the partner organization; build respect for and from your partner by delivering on promises, understanding your partner's struggles, and working in innovative ways that help the partnership deliver on its goals. The commonalities across the partnership in regards to these critical success factors suggest their importance in local business attraction efforts, but it also indicates these critical success factors stretch across all community college/EDO partners employing a variety of economic and community growth tactics, as the participants integrated business attraction efforts with other community development activities. Expanding this research to a broader group of partners across the United States in a quantitative study may help further distinguish the critical success factors in community college/EDO partnerships.

# Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	xii
List of Tables .....	xiii
Acknowledgements .....	xiv
Dedication .....	xvi
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Background of the Problem .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks .....	7
Methodology .....	8
Delimitations and Assumptions .....	9
Significance of the Study .....	9
Definitions of Terms .....	10
Chapter Summary .....	11
Organization of the Study .....	12
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	13
The Literature Search.....	13
Economic Development Organizations .....	13
Economic Development Practices in the United States .....	14
Changes in Economic Development Programs.....	16
Workforce Needs and the Talent Pipeline .....	17
Middle-Skills Workers and Middle-Skills Jobs .....	17
Changes in Middle-Skills Jobs and Workforce Needs .....	18
Employer Needs in Talent Pipeline .....	20
Community College Roles.....	22
History of Community College Development of Middle-Skills Workers .....	22
Work With Existing Local Employers.....	23
Building New Local Businesses .....	24



Partnerships between Community Colleges and Economic Development Organizations .....	25
State-Level Partnerships .....	25
Local and Regional Partnerships .....	27
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks .....	29
Critical Success Factor Theory .....	29
Kanter's Collaborative Advantages .....	30
Summary .....	32
Chapter 3 - Methodology .....	34
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	34
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks .....	34
Research Design .....	35
Study Setting.....	37
Study Participants .....	38
Instrumentation .....	39
Data Collection and Data Sources .....	39
Data Analysis .....	40
Credibility and Dependability.....	41
Ethical Considerations .....	42
Reflexivity Statement.....	44
Limitations .....	45
Summary .....	45
Chapter 4 - Research Results and Analysis .....	47
Research Questions.....	47
Method of Data Collection and Validation .....	48
Participant Demographics.....	48
Eight "I" Critical Success Factors in Participant Partnerships .....	51
Kanter's Collaborative Advantages .....	52
Individual Excellence.....	54
Colleges.....	54
EDOs.....	55
Importance .....	56

Colleges.....	57
EDOs.....	58
Interdependence .....	60
Colleges.....	61
EDOs.....	62
Investment.....	63
Colleges.....	65
EDOs.....	66
Information .....	67
Colleges.....	69
EDOs.....	71
Integration .....	71
Colleges.....	73
EDOs.....	75
Institutionalization .....	75
Colleges.....	77
EDOs.....	78
Integrity .....	78
Colleges.....	79
EDOs.....	80
Other Success Factors in Participant Partnerships.....	81
Multiple Areas of Interaction between Partners .....	81
Executive Decision-Maker as a Single Point of Contact .....	83
Colleges.....	84
EDOs.....	85
Flexibility, Speed, and Agility by Colleges .....	86
Colleges.....	87
EDOs.....	88
Research Question Results.....	89
Research Question #1 .....	90
Research Question #2 .....	91

Summary .....	93
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations .....	94
Problem Overview .....	94
Purpose of the Study .....	95
Research Questions .....	96
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks .....	96
Methodology .....	97
Data Collection and Analysis .....	97
Significance of the Study .....	98
Findings .....	99
Finding #1 - Partnerships are Not Focused on a Single Activity .....	99
Finding #2 - Communication is King, and Trust is its Crown .....	101
Finding #3 - The Heart of it All is the Community .....	103
Finding #4 - Respect the Hurdles Each Partner Overcomes for Joint Success .....	104
Finding #5 - Speed, Agility, and the Decision-Maker Must be Present .....	105
Finding #6 - Partners Invest in Each Other, Repeatedly and Over the Long-Term .....	106
Finding #7 – Community Colleges Fulfill Employers #1 Need .....	108
Findings Related to Literature .....	109
Implications .....	110
Community Colleges .....	111
Economic Development Organizations .....	112
Local Governments .....	112
Unexpected Results .....	113
Recommendations for Further Research .....	114
Summary .....	114
References .....	117
Appendix A - Community College Interview Protocol .....	130
Appendix B - Economic Development Organization Interview Protocol .....	132

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1 Number of Interviews by Organization Type by College .....	49
Figure 2 Number of Participants by EDO Type .....	50
Figure 3 Number of Participants by Job Level .....	50

## **List of Tables**

Table 1 Study Participants by School .....	38
Table 2 Study Partnerships and Participants by School.....	48
Table 3 Interview Comments by College/EDO Partners on the College Workforce Decision-Maker .....	84
Table 4 RQ #1 Summary of Findings by CSFs of Each Organization’s Contribution to the Partnership .....	90
Table 5 RQ #2 – The Programs, Policies, or Practices at All Colleges in the Study Discussed by Partners .....	92

## **Acknowledgements**

This study, and my entire doctoral journey, was completed with the help of a village. I could not have done this without considerable assistance, guidance, and support.

To my mom and sister who hardly saw me over the past three years but were always there to support and encourage me. All the love and validation you gave me during my many years on this earth prepared me for this challenge. And to my in-laws, who always said they were very proud of me. But with the number of doctors in the family, I had to do this just to keep up.

To Margie and Cheryl, you were there with support from the moment I was accepted into the program. Through the pandemic isolation, you helped keep me sane, listened to my boring education stories, and ensured I had my share of fun and laughter. If not for you, I would have become a hermit permanently.

To my College of the Desert cohort, knowing we were in this together helped make the voyage manageable, and sometimes even fun. I know we will continue to support one another and have each other's backs, no matter the roles we are in.

To Joel Kinnamon, whose dedication to continuous improvement at College of the Desert introduced a group of us from the college to the Roueche Community College Leadership Program. The impact on our college's culture will be felt for years to come, and my life has been forever changed.

To my co-chair, teacher, and mentor, Dr. Terry Calaway, your guidance and support was invaluable throughout this program and your positive input and comments pulled me through the dissertation process. You are a treasure to me and to the CCLP.

To my other co-chair, teacher, and trailblazer, Dr. Margaretta Mathis, your help throughout the process kept me thinking and investigating. The passion you, and Dr. Calaway, showed toward my research topic was inspirational.

To my committee, the knowledge and experience you brought to my dissertation topic helped shape the final product in a way that made it more complete and informative. I will take your advice to go forth and educate others on my findings.

To the participants of my study, your example of collaboration, trust, communication, and focus on inclusive economic development is an inspiration to everyone who wants to help community college students succeed and communities thrive.

To all of the faculty and staff of the Kansas State University Community College Leadership Program, the College of the Desert Board of Trustees, and Dr. Sara Butler, thank you for the challenge and the support to thrive during this challenge. You helped me understand the privilege of working at a community college.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my wife, Alicia, whose enduring faith and love is the bedrock of my life. With you and because of you, I can take on any challenge and succeed. I could not ask for a better partner, friend, and soul mate.



## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Traditional middle-skills jobs—those requiring more than a high school diploma but less than a 4 year college degree —are changing. As business success becomes more dependent on knowledge, communities can prosper from partnering with their local community college to capitalize on these changes (Shaffer, 2015). Prior to the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic in which many people lost their jobs and numerous companies closed, macroeconomic data indicated a tremendously strong economy in the United States (Council of Economic Advisors, 2019). Nevertheless, prosperity was inconsistent (Gould, 2018). Traditional middle-wage, middle-skills jobs were being transformed into low-wage, low-skills jobs (Autor et al., 2003). This phenomenon was documented in a recent Brookings Institute analysis that revealed people who held middle-skills, middle-wage jobs before the Great Recession may now work in low-wage jobs (Ross & Bateman, 2020, January 8).

Jaimovich and Siu (2014) asserted this “hollowing of the middle” resulted from three decades of job polarization and anemic jobless recoveries due to robotics, computing, technology, and changes in production methods. They further suggested these “routine” middle-skills jobs affected by technology would continue to decline in numbers and wages. Foote and Ryan (2015) noted,

Polarization stems from two complementary forces: automation, which replaces workers in routine occupations like assembly-line work or clerical jobs with machines or computers, and international trade, which encourages firms to offshore routine tasks to countries where wages are lower. Jobs in the middle part of the skill distribution suffer more from automation and trade because these jobs tend to encompass more routine tasks than high- or low-skill jobs. (p. 373)

As traditional routine middle-skills jobs decline in number, the skills required to do many ongoing and newer jobs are quickly evolving (Dobbs et al., 2015). Middle-skills jobs are changing and requiring higher-level skills (Holzer, 2015, April). Collectively, these changes in existing jobs and new jobs often trigger a shortage of qualified labor (Madigan, 2015).

The shortage of qualified new middle-skills workers opens an opportunity for local economic development organizations (EDOs) to build their economy by partnering with community colleges to create a reliable talent pipeline that attracts new businesses experiencing this labor shortage (Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15). The new 15% global minimum corporate tax (Dangor, 2021, July 11) may also encourage onshoring of business activities, further increasing the need for qualified middle-skills workers. By actively participating in local initiatives to bring in new employers to a region, community colleges can help rebuild middle-skills, middle-wage jobs and fulfill their historic mandate to contribute to the prosperity of their community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Significant research has been done demonstrating the value and role of community colleges in promoting small business development and training workers for existing local employer needs (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999; Dyer, 2017c; Gossett, 2002; Grubb et al., 1997). However, this researcher has found few studies on the role of community colleges partnering with local EDOs to attract new employers to a region and pairing the new employers' jobs with locally trained workers. Shaffer (2015), a Senior Fellow at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, observed that 4-year colleges and universities are valuable partners in creating innovation and building a workforce pipeline to attract new investments and employers to an area. In relation to economic growth and business competitiveness, Shaffer (2015) wrote, "The

most widespread, and arguably the most important, way in which higher education institutions help support the competitiveness and growth of employers in their communities is through worker training programs” (p. 67). Shaffer further observed states focus delivery of job-specific training to employers through community and technical colleges. As community colleges historically focus on middle-skills workforce training and employers are often unable to fill all of their available middle-skills jobs, building successful partnerships between community colleges and local EDOs may help create strong incentives for employers to relocate into an area.

Located within driving distance of almost every community in the United States, community colleges conveniently provide access to low-cost, universally accessible education and training to all adult learners (Baime, 2019). Traditionally focused on building middle-skills workers, community colleges assist employers in filling a labor gap not usually satisfied by university graduates (Holzer, 2016). Understanding the successful community college/EDO partnerships able to attract new employers could assist regions in building their economies.

Previously, companies struggling to fill middle-skills jobs have raised academic requirements as a proxy for needed skills (Fuller, 2017). Conversely, current 4-year degree requirements are being loosened in favor of skills-testing and certificate requirements (Day, 2020). Employers are reconsidering minimum educational requirements for many middle-skills, middle-wage jobs (Maurer, 2019). Community colleges are uniquely positioned to help workers and localities adapt to changes in the market (Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15). Qualified middle-skills workers help companies with innovation. As Shaffer (2015) stated, “workers being trained are learning something that will enable their employer to adopt new processes, or to produce new products or services, in ways that will improve the efficiency, competitiveness, and staying power of the firm” (p. 67).

Over half of all jobs in the United States are middle-skills jobs and fewer than 44% of workers are trained at the middle-skills level (Bergson, 2016), which is historically community colleges' workforce development focus area (Holzer, 2016). In addition, the demand for middle-skills jobs is expected to remain strong, with an estimated 48% of all job openings through 2024 being for middle-skills jobs . Many community colleges offer employer-specific and job-specific workforce training as non-credit classes outside their regular academic guidelines (Shaffer, 2015). The ability of community colleges to offer job- or employer-specific training suggests the benefit of community colleges as an integral part of any EDO's employer-attraction initiative. The focus of this study was to explore and research this phenomenon and report upon the traits and characteristics of community college/EDO partnerships that have successfully attracted new businesses to their service area.

### **Background of the Problem**

A discrepancy between macro and microeconomic indicators, changes in required job skills, and workforce automation are negatively affecting regions and driving many local leaders to rely on their EDOs to improve employment (Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15). Technology is rapidly ushering in an era of significant changes in the nature of work, called the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* by the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Schwab, 2016). This international organization, which comprises global business, as well as academic, political and other leaders, focuses on issues concerning the global political economy and posits in this Fourth Industrial Revolution many jobs and job functions will be done by robots or artificial intelligence. WEF indicated workers will be tasked with learning new and different skills at an ever-increasing rate (Schwab, 2016). For some time, economists have predicted that jobs consisting primarily of

routine tasks that are limited in scope and can be performed by following a well-defined set of procedures will fade as automation costs decrease (Jaimovich & Siu, 2014).

Middle-skills jobs are evolving from routine jobs, many of which have been shifted offshore or primarily automated and reduced to low-skills jobs, to “newer” middle-skills jobs requiring more technical, administrative, or communicative skills (Holzer, 2015, April). These new, middle-skills jobs often go unfilled due to a mismatch of labor supply and demand by geography or a dearth of qualified, skilled candidates (Tovar, 2020) or filled by foreign nationals.

Generally, local EDOs fuel economic development through building local, home-grown small businesses, removing barriers to growth for local businesses while developing incentives for those businesses, and attracting new business to the area (Donahue et al., 2017). Community colleges’ roles in building new local businesses and assisting existing local businesses are well documented and support their general organizational mission to strengthen the communities in which they operate. The focus on workforce development and meeting local employer needs has been a part of community college missions almost since their founding (Cohen et al., 2013). They generally have not been an integral part of attracting new businesses to an area, particularly in partnership with EDOs. Historically, EDOs have used tax incentives, cash grants, and other cost-minimizing tools to drive business growth and investment (Zheng & Warner, 2010). Some state and local EDOs, however, recognize businesses’ growing need for a qualified workforce and are incorporating training and education tools into their incentive programs (Shaffer, 2015). Despite studies showing the long-term value of education and infrastructure investments for economic development (Berger & Fisher, 2013), more than half of EDOs continue to focus on

tax incentives and other cost abatement tools to drive economic development (Zheng & Warner, 2010).

As the need for innovation in U.S. business has increased, some EDOs have devoted more time to developing partnerships with universities. Shaffer (2015) noted universities and 4-year colleges are increasingly using their knowledge and innovation to attract new business. According to Shaffer (2015), “a study launched by the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that states are increasingly looking to their higher education institutions and systems to become engines of economic growth” (p. 67).

With the shortage of middle-skills workers for non-routine jobs and the cost of recruiting new employees continuously scrutinized, community colleges could now be considered an advantageous partner for EDOs seeking to attract new employers to their areas. Developing a talent pipeline for middle-skills jobs through community colleges could reduce turnover in companies within the community college’s service area, as community college students remain in the area from which they graduated more often than 4-year college graduates (Schmitt et al., 2020). Studies have indicated that 61% of community college graduates live within 50 miles of their alma maters, compared with 40% of state university graduates and an even smaller percentage of graduates of “highly selective” schools (Schmitt et al., 2020).

The new middle-skills jobs are well-suited to graduates of community college training and education. In addition, as community college graduates are more likely to remain in their alma mater’s service area, re-training as job skills change can be made available through the community college. Notwithstanding this opportunity to provide an appropriate talent pool to prospective employers, little research has been done to examine the characteristics of community

college and local EDOs partnerships that have been successful in attracting new employers to their service areas.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the elements of community college and EDO partnerships that successfully collaborate to attract new employers to an area and to discern the organizational elements at the community college that help these partnerships succeed. The form and function of these successful partnerships could provide models for other community colleges interested in developing or improving partnerships with their local EDOs. Overall, this study was designed to uncover common themes and patterns across successful community college/EDO partnerships.

### **Research Questions**

Two primary research questions guided this study:

1. What are the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to their service area?
2. What programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributed to this partnership that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the area?

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

The theoretical framework guiding this study was the critical success factor theory, which states that success requires focus on a limited number of key areas (Rockart, 1979). Specifically, critical success factors (CSFs) are “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization” (Bullen & Rockart, 1981, p. 7). These CSFs were originally developed to define specific information needed by chief executive officers of businesses to focus on crucial information

required to be successful in meeting operational and strategic goals (Rockart, 1979). Over the last 40 years, this theory has been applied to business, government, public-private partnerships, and a host of other types of organizations and partnerships to describe a method of achieving success (Alexander, 1997). The specific CSFs vary across situations, organizations, industries, and time (Alpern, 2020).

Kanter (1994) developed CSFs leading to collaborative advantages for companies through studying partnerships and alliances in the business supply chain across a variety of countries. Collaborative advantage is the benefit received by the partners above what they would have received working alone (Pinnington et al., 2020). The CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) in building advantageous partnerships are Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. This study applied Kanter's eight criteria for successful collaborative partnerships, called the eight "I"s, as the conceptual framework with which to analyze the case study partnerships between community colleges and EDOs. Alexander (1997) applied this framework to community college interorganizational partnerships involving community colleges, businesses, and community stakeholders, which demonstrated its applicability to successful community college partnerships.

## **Methodology**

This research employed a qualitative study using a multiple-case design that explored the phenomenon of successful partnerships between community colleges and EDOs. The study used semistructured interviews of key individuals from each organization within the partnerships analyzed through the lens of the CSF framework for successful collaborative partnerships outlined by Kanter (1994). This multiple-case study design contributes to the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships (Yin, 2018) across the partnerships.



Cases were selected based on identified community college/EDO partnerships that successfully attracted new employers to their regions. This purposeful sampling of exemplary partnerships was done as “an effective way to discover how success is achieved” (Roueche & Baker, p. 10).

### **Delimitations and Assumptions**

This study was delimited to partnerships between local/regional EDOs and community colleges that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the community college service area. Research was focused on the partnerships and elements of the community college programs, policies, or practices that were perceived to have contributed to the partnership’s success. Other activity in the community, the EDOs, and the colleges were not included in the study unless it related to the success of the partnerships being studied.

The researcher assumed that interviewees were truthful about their experiences, actions, and relationships; that the author had access to relevant key individuals; and, that there were no hidden agendas among partners and interviewees.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study highlights the elements of EDO/community college partnerships and community college structures that have successfully attracted new employers into a community. The research about these successful partnerships could contribute to economic development practices in similar community college service areas by modeling CSFs in successful partnerships that brought new employers to a region. In addition, it could serve as a model for how community colleges and EDOs partner and positively contribute to the goals and mission statement of each organization and improvements in the community.

These collaborative CSFs may also inform policy development by local governments to encourage partnerships between EDOs and community colleges to grow middle-skills jobs in local areas, improve economic diversity, and help grow the local tax base by moving citizens from low-wage jobs to middle-wage jobs. Applied within individual institutions, this study could lead to development of policies that foster partnerships across economic development entities.

Finally, this study adds to the body of knowledge related to community colleges and EDO partnerships. The current literature about community college/EDO relationships focuses on improving the talent pool for existing employers and growing small businesses in a region. This study, which focused exclusively on partnerships that successfully attracted new employers to an area, could provide a basis for regions seeking foundational knowledge as they look to change, diversify, or modernize their economic base of employers.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Collaborative Advantage** - The incremental gain attributed to outcomes that could not have been achieved by either of the individual organizations alone (Pinnington et al., 2020)

**Critical Success Factors (CSFs)** – Bullen and Rockart (1981) noted:

CSFs are the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization. CSFs are the few key areas where “things must go right” for the business to flourish and for the manager's goals to be attained (p. 7).

**Economic development** – According to the International Economic Development Council (n.d.),

Economic development is the intentional practice of improving a community’s economic well-being and quality of life. It includes a broad-range of activities to attract, create, and

retain jobs, and to foster a resilient, progrowth tax base and an inclusive economy. The practice of economic development comprises of a collaborative effort involving industry, government and myriad community stakeholders.

**Local Economic Development Organizations (EDOs)** – Most often charged with building the local or regional economy, EDOs are “regional, public-private economic development entities, including chambers of commerce and business leadership groups” (Donahue et al., 2017, p. 5).

**Middle-skills jobs** – Jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than a 4-year college degree (Jaimovich & Siu, 2014).

**Routine task jobs** – Occupations that primarily perform “routine” tasks – “tasks that are limited in scope and can be performed by following a well-defined set of procedures” (Jaimovich & Siu, 2014, p. 11).

**Workforce development** – According to Robert Jacobs and Joshua D. Hawley, professors of Workforce Development and Education at Ohio State University, “Workforce development is the coordination of public and private-sector policies and programs that provides individuals with the opportunity for a sustainable livelihood and helps organizations achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the societal context” (as cited in Haralson, 2010).

## **Chapter Summary**

Changes in workforce needs and local economies call for attention to partnerships between EDOs and community colleges for the purpose of attracting new employers who create middle-skills jobs in a community college service area. This chapter discussed the study undertaken, the problem being addressed, the purpose of the study, the research questions that guided the study, and the significance of the study. critical success factor theory was introduced

as the theoretical framework guiding this study. The conceptual framework focused on Kanter (1994) eight “I”s of collaborative partnerships. Delimitations and assumptions of the study were noted as was key terminology used in this study.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 1 of the dissertation presents an overview of the problem, its significance and the outline of the study. Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review of the work of EDOs, past, present, and future workforce needs, the role of community colleges in regional workforce training and economic development, and, partnerships between EDOs and community colleges. Chapter 2 also includes the theoretical and conceptual framework of critical success factor theory relevant to partnerships and gaps in knowledge related to recruiting new employers to create middle-skills jobs. Chapter 3 details the qualitative multiple-case study research methodology used for the study. Chapter 4 discusses the research findings, and Chapter 5 concludes the study with implications and researcher recommendations.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

For decades, community colleges and businesses have worked together to solve workforce problems in mutually beneficial ways (Alexander, 1997; Carnevale & Desrochers, 2003; Roueche & Jones, 2005). The working relationship between community colleges and economic development organizations is less well-developed and researched, although both organizations have similar goals and concerns (Dyer, 2017b). This chapter discusses the literature search, provides an overview of existing research related economic development organizations, the workforce needs and the talent pipeline, community college roles in developing middle-skills workers, and the partnerships between community colleges and economic development organizations. Finally, this chapter includes a review of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning this study.

### **The Literature Search**

The information in this chapter was gathered from a variety of sources, is both current and historic, from 1961 to 2021, to encompass the earliest work on critical success factors and the most recent studies on workforce needs. It has been analyzed to demonstrate the body of knowledge related to the dissertation topic. Specific literature sources include peer-reviewed journals, books, industry articles, dissertations, text books, working papers, and industry web sites. Information from electronically published government documents, policy institute white papers, and industry reports was also included.

### **Economic Development Organizations**

Economic development is generally oriented toward creating an attractive business environment for growth, stability, and profitability (Conway, 2011). A wide variety of entities

work toward economic development. Donahue et al. (2017) described the array of entities focused on economic development in most communities:

In any region, economic development is the concern of many different, overlapping organizations with varying (and sometimes contradictory) tools, responsibilities, and philosophies, and which work at the state, region, county, and city levels. Also part of the mix are government agencies, public-private entities, and privately funded business groups. (p. 11)

### **Economic Development Practices in the United States**

Economic development organizations (EDOs) in business attraction and growth programs have traditionally used firm-specific incentives, such as subsidized loans, tax exemptions, or even direct payments to firms, and many regional and local economic development efforts continue to use these incentives designed to reduce costs to private firms (Zheng & Warner, 2010). In their study examining local governmental economic development programs, Zheng and Warner (2010) found that the number of governmental EDOs using these incentives decreased from 82% in 1994 to 68% in 2004, but this rate increased to 90% in 2009 amidst the Great Recession (Warner & Zheng, 2013). EDOs that continue to use cost abatement incentives often tie performance, such as the creation of a specific number of jobs over a particular salary level, to the deployment of incentives. One study found that job creation credits grew from almost nothing in 1990 to almost \$20 billion in 2015, whereas the average incentive offer to individual firms almost tripled during that same time period (Bartik, 2019). On average, in 2015 the types of state-level incentives offered in economic development programs had a total annual cost of about \$50 billion, apportioned as 28% property tax abatement, 14% research and development

credit, 38% job creation tax credit, 14% investment tax credit, 2% customized job training, and 4% other (Bartik, 2019).

Traditional economic development programs are measured by revenue benefits accrued to an area based on business attraction and growth (Bartik, 2019). More recently, economic development programs measure their value by the number of jobs created or retained or by the additional businesses attracted to a community (Conway, 2011). Three strategies in economic development have been identified by scholars: business attraction, business retention, and broader community development (Zheng & Warner, 2010). Business attraction strategies often focus on programs designed to bring specific firms into an area and, historically, have used subsidized loans, tax exemptions, or direct payments to firms (Zheng & Warner, 2010). Despite a stated goal of job creation in most economic development programs, generally little money or attention has been given to job training (Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15).

EDOs defined in this research are local and regional organizations tasked with local economic development. Local EDOs most often use the traditional strategies and tools listed above (Zhang et al., 2017) to make a community financially attractive for business investment and operations, job creation, and overall growth of their region (Donahue et al., 2017). Business attraction and job creation targets are commonly used to measure the impact and effectiveness of EDOs (Donahue et al., 2017). Nevertheless, some recent reports have noted that expansion and relocation of major businesses declined by 50% between 2000 and 2012 (Donahue et al., 2017), causing a decline in the number and size of business attraction projects for state and regional EDOs. In contrast, Dyer (2017a) suggested that in regions where economies are tied to single industries or employers, EDOs may look to diversify employment and tax bases using available tools to attract a broader base of businesses.

## **Changes in Economic Development Programs**

In some regions, EDOs approach economic development in a non-traditional way and are viewed as thought leaders, utilizing a broad network of relationships to set a growth agenda (Donahue et al., 2017). Many of these newer business economic development programs are based on community economic development strategies, which help build inclusive economic development in a local area. These community economic development strategies focus on a broader set of issues, including small business development, workforce supports, and quality of life issues (Zhang et al., 2017). As thought leaders in economic development combine traditional business incentives, such as tax abatement, with activities such as job training, areas enjoy a more sustainable economic development impact (Zhang et al., 2017).

The 21st century paradigm for economic growth and development is shifting toward knowledge and innovation, versus cost reductions and financial incentives, or employing a hybrid approach, incorporating a combination of tax incentives and innovation access, as done in New York's "START-UP NY" (Shaffer, 2015). This program, open to new, expanding, and relocating companies, offers tax-free status to companies who locate to a college campus and collaborate with that institution. A few states advanced this idea of economic development through innovation well ahead of the turn of the century. North Carolina opened the Research Triangle Park in 1960 and it is credited with transforming the local economy by creating over 1 million jobs and significantly increasing local wages (Shaffer, 2015). A survey of North Carolina business executives done by Jolley et al. (2015) found that a skilled workforce was significantly more important in location, investment, and growth activities than tax incentives.

Some EDOs work with local universities to drive innovation with the private sector in specialized industries. More specifically, research universities are seen as a key link in



technology industries between growth in patents and commercialization of new technologies leading to local economic growth (Velluzzi, 2010). For example, the city of Richmond, Virginia, created the Virginia Biotechnology Research Park to support entrepreneurial start-ups leveraging university strengths in biotechnology, bio-medical engineering, electronic engineering and microelectronics (Cohen, 2000). It also established Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology to commercialize research and development from the university and adjacent NASA facilities (Cohen, 2000). Such specialized projects, combined with the traditional EDO tools outlined above, help EDOs fulfill their mission to sell their region to companies that might relocate there (Donahue et al., 2017).

## **Workforce Needs and the Talent Pipeline**

### **Middle-Skills Workers and Middle-Skills Jobs**

After World War II, the United States experienced a boom in automation and technology, as well as in the economy. In the first 40 years after the war, occupations skewed away from physically dangerous, menial and demanding jobs toward skilled blue- and white-collar jobs (Autor, 2015). Autor's analysis of economic, technological, and business data from the 1960s to the 2010s reviewed the rise of middle-skills jobs. The author found the new use of technology and automation created a significant number of jobs for high-skills workers and their supporting clerical, administrative, and sales workers, now considered traditional middle-skills workers, while eliminating physically demanding, low-skills jobs such as agricultural and labor jobs. Autor's work underscored how middle-skills, white-collar jobs required some education beyond high school, a difference from the low-skills jobs, previously the only option for non-college educated workers.

Today, some amount of higher education is a key pathway to reach the middle class. As Carnevale et al. (2020) stated, “Education beyond high school is now the preferred currency for workers seeking economic opportunity in the US labor market” (p. 1). Through a focus on careers in specific industries and occupations, middle-skills educational pathways with certificate or associate’s degree attainment can lead to higher earning potential than those earning bachelor’s degrees (Carnevale et al., 2020).

### **Changes in Middle-Skills Jobs and Workforce Needs**

Research on middle-skills, middle-wage jobs and workers show both a “hollowing out” (Autor, 2010, p. 10) of the middle economic sector of the workforce and a growing dearth of qualified middle-skills workers. These seemingly contradictory trends reflect the technological changes happening in the workplace (Autor, 2015). Traditional middle-skills workers primarily performed tasks that required basic knowledge, such as simple mathematical calculations and the ability to follow rules and procedures. As technology prices declined, much of the work performed by traditional middle-skills workers became more cost-effective to automate (Autor et al., 2003).

Traditional middle-skills work, such as bookkeeping, clerical, administrative support, and production, consisted of duties composed of codifiable, explicit, rules-based tasks. These tasks, labeled “routine tasks” by Autor et al. (2003) and Jaimovich and Siu (2014), comprise retrieving, sorting, and storing structured information, and the precise executing of repetitive physical actions or a well-defined set of procedures. Because these tasks are repetitive, follow precise rules, and are well understood, they easily can be codified into software or automated for robotics. As Leopold et al. (2018) noted, “Jobs expected to become increasingly redundant over the 2018-2022 period are routine-based, middle-skilled white-collar roles—such as Data Entry

Clerks, Accounting and Payroll Clerks, Secretaries, Auditors, Bank Tellers and Cashiers” (p. 9). The loss of middle-skills jobs defined by tasks that are increasingly automated contributed to the “hollowing middle” of the workplace (Holzer, 2015, April).

As Florida (2012) observed, many higher paying working-class jobs have been replaced by high-wage creative jobs and low-wage service jobs. Jobs with tasks that are difficult to automate, such as those involving problem-solving, creativity, persuasion, situational adaptability, and in-person interactions, exist in high- and low-skills jobs. Both high- and low-skills jobs have increased in numbers, in contrast to traditional middle-skills jobs. As Autor (2015) noted, “In 1979, the four middle-skill occupations (sales; office and administrative workers; production workers; and operatives) accounted for 60 percent of employment. In 2007, this number was 49 percent, and in 2012, it was 46 percent” (p. 14).

Middle-skills jobs, however, are expanding and evolving to include different, less automatable tasks. Medical support occupations, such as phlebotomists, nurse technicians, and radiology technicians, are growing and offer well-paying jobs but require “middle-skill” knowledge of mathematics, life sciences, and analytical reasoning (Autor, 2015). STEM occupations, such as engineering technicians and computer support specialists, are growing, well-paid middle-skills jobs (Carnevale et al., 2020). Other new middle-skills jobs include skilled tradespeople, some marketing specialists, 3-D printer operators, and computer programmers. Jobs with tasks that include decision-making functions, coordinating, and a combination of technical and interpersonal tasks are also growing (Autor, 2015). Additionally, jobs that require skills in advanced manufacturing, information technology, protective services, and sales are considered part of the new middle-skills jobs categories (Holzer, 2015, April). Even manufacturing, once a primary source of well-paying jobs for those with a high school diploma,

has seen a dramatic shift. Since 1970, those with a high school diploma holding manufacturing jobs has decreased from 79% of workers to 43%, whereas middle-skills workers have doubled as a share of the manufacturing workforce to about 25% (Carnevale et al., 2019).

Interestingly, employers are having trouble filling these new middle-skills jobs with qualified workers and look to higher education institutions to develop talent pipelines for these jobs (Holzer, 2015, April) or hire in foreign nationals. As Holzer (2015, April) has noted, “Job creation by employers for middle-skilled workers likely depends partly on their perceived costs of finding and generating workers” (p. 5).

### **Employer Needs in Talent Pipeline**

Employers recognize that one of their most important assets is a qualified, reliable workforce pipeline. As Florida noted, “Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steelmaking” (2002, p. 6). In their extensive analysis of employment and economic data, Parilla and Lui (2019, October 15) concluded, “Workforce quality is paramount to core economic development interests such as business attraction, retention, and expansion” (p. 4). *Area Development* magazine’s 34th annual survey of corporate executives and 16th annual survey of business relocation consultants found that almost 95% of corporate executives rate the availability of skilled labor and 60% rate access to training programs or technical colleges as *very important* or *important* to their investment location decisions. In the same survey, 100% and 80% of relocation consultants rate availability of skilled labor and access to training programs or technical colleges, respectively, as *very important* or *important* to their investment location recommendations (Gambale, 2020). The Amazon corporation’s 2019 selection of cities for a second corporate headquarters was driven to a large extent by the availability of a qualified talent pool (“The headquarters checklist: How do

companies pick a location?," 2017). Their request for proposals asked for a list of universities and community colleges, the number of students and degrees from each, and the K-12 education system related to computer science. Often, a company's strategic decision to expand or hire can depend on the availability of qualified job candidates. As Holzer (2016) stated, "Job availability can sometimes rise in response to the creation of newly skilled workers—in other words, improvements in the supply of skills can help generate demand for them" (p. 6).

Foreign companies often locate to areas in the United States based on their perception of the availability of skilled workers. Over the past 25 years, car manufacturers have flocked to South Carolina (South Carolina Department of Commerce, n.d.) and Tennessee partly based on the reliability of the talent pool. Siemens Corporation waited to build a manufacturing plant in North Carolina until their arrangements with local community colleges and universities could create a steady supply of qualified technicians and engineers (Holzer, 2016). Though foreign companies are attracted by the low taxes, energy costs, and low regulations in the United States, many are hesitant to invest until labor skills issues are solved (Holzer, 2016). "For most businesses, the issue of location choice now is driven by labor" says Wharton management professor Peter Cappelli ("The headquarters checklist: How do companies pick a location?," 2017, para. 2). Companies are making relocation, location, and expansion decisions based on the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce (Conway, 2011). Some companies are no longer willing to fund in-house training to develop the skills needed in their workforce (Hagel et al., 2019). The World Economic Forum's *The Future of Jobs Report 2018* reported nearly two thirds of human resources executives said they expect workers to adapt and pick up new skills in the course of their changing jobs (Leopold et al., 2018). Overall, the literature on the talent

pipeline documents ongoing and growing needs for worker skill development to match ever-changing workforce needs.

## **Community College Roles**

### **History of Community College Development of Middle-Skills Workers**

Community colleges have been heavily focused on job training since the establishment of the first vocational college (Brint, 1989; Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). By definition, community colleges' primary clientele for job training and education are middle-skills workers because these require an associate degree, postsecondary certificate, or vocational credential but less than a baccalaureate degree (Kress & de los Santos, 2014). Community colleges conduct this training in credit, non-credit (Holzer, 2016), and contract education options (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999), depending on the institutional structure, the situation, and the employers.

In three separate nationwide surveys, over 90% of community colleges listed contract training for businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies among their education and training offerings (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). In contract training courses, students learn technical skills that often can be used outside the contracting organization, thus adding to the talent pool of middle-skills workers in an area and giving the community college the opportunity to fulfill its mission by meeting the training needs of the local business community (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999).

Some states, such as South Carolina, have used access to community college training as part of the incentive package to bring large employers into the state (Cohen, 2000). As Dougherty and Bakia (1999) noted, "Besides retraining skilled crafts-workers, community colleges have also been assisting the auto companies to retrain their engineers and technicians when the companies change over from one graphic design system to another" (p. 15).

## **Work With Existing Local Employers**

The current training and education offered by community colleges for middle-skills workers is primarily designed to support the needs and opportunities of the local business community (Dyer, 2017c). Colleges may participate in local planning groups to understand emerging trends, technologies, and work practices affecting local businesses (Grubb et al., 1997); gather data on changes in labor market demand and future labor needs of local employers (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999); or conduct customized training to help increase the productivity and competitiveness of local businesses (Fitzgerald, 1998).

One example of a college actively supporting local employers and industries to meet current and future labor demands is Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC). As the economy of the North Carolina Piedmont area changed, GTCC established local corporate partnerships in core industry sectors (Roueche & Roueche, 2012). As the authors describe, GTCC grew new partnerships in the aviation and transportation sectors and expanded a partnership with an area employer in aviation maintenance to aid in local economic development. Another demonstration of leadership in North Carolina's community college partnerships with local business was the development of Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Program. CPCC sent four instructors to Siemens' Berlin training facility to become certified to train students for the program. The workforce program now helps Siemens' talent pipeline in North Carolina as well as related industry clusters in the area (Kress & de los Santos, 2014).

San Jacinto College in Texas partnered with local employers and industries to offer workforce training that meets the key labor needs across the region and builds a talent pool to fulfill employer needs across a variety of local industries (Tutak & Ludgate, 2019). In Hazard,

Kentucky, the local community college provides Lineman Training to meet the specific training needs of the local electrical utility industry and offers reskilling training for workers in other local employers (Dyer, 2017c).

In Kansas, long a transportation hub for the United States, a training center at Johnson County Community College was established in 1986 in partnership with BNSF Railway to educate their employees on railroad operations. Initially designed to build a skilled workforce pipeline for their new Kansas City area transportation facilities, this program now serves almost 14,000 students annually from railroads across the United States and Mexico and adds more than \$60 million to the local economy (Kress & de los Santos, 2014).

Overall, community colleges take on the economic development task of building and maintaining a middle-skills workforce pipeline to aid local businesses (Fitzgerald, 1998).

### **Building New Local Businesses**

Beyond providing credit, non-credit, and contract training for local businesses, community colleges offer a variety of services and educational opportunities, from providing incubators and informational services to developing and growing local start-up businesses, as part of their mission to help the community (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). For many community colleges, this local business incubation is a growing focus area (Dyer, 2017c). Springfield Technical Community College in Massachusetts operates a technology park and incubator that houses 26 tenants, most of them start-ups, that have access to college faculty and employ college's students (Shaffer, 2015). In addition to incubators, community colleges are offering business support services, market development and marketing, rapid prototyping, and partnerships with local banks and Small Business Association resources (Dyer, 2017a). LaGuardia Community College in New York and Lorain County Community College in Ohio



combined all of the start-up assistance tools into “maker spaces” to actively work with the community on building new businesses (O'Banion, 2019).

## **Partnerships between Community Colleges and Economic Development Organizations**

Community colleges offer programs and services to help local businesses and workers but are ineffective or inefficient at pursuing economic development on their own (Conway, 2011). As Conway notes:

If workforce development and economic development goals, priorities and strategies are not pursued in a coordinated fashion, labor supply and demand imbalances will become more problematic. As a result, too many – or too few – skilled workers will be prepared for the number of jobs available. (p. 3)

Community colleges can, however, be productive partners in economic development by matching business outreach with education and training (Fitzgerald, 1998).

### **State-Level Partnerships**

Many community college/EDO partnerships discussed in the literature focus on state level EDOs. Certain states, including Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, recognized the importance of a qualified workforce for employers decades ago and include education and training in their state-level economic development programs (Cohen, 2000). On the state level, these programs tend to be flexible, well-funded, centralized, and customizable, thus highly desirable to employers (Crawford, 2013). A few of the well-researched state programs are discussed below.

Georgia's program, called Quick Start, offers staff, experience, and resources to help new employers and expanding employers in the state to develop customized training programs

anywhere in the state using the community college system. This centralized program development allows for local training via the community colleges but eliminates the need for companies to work with each individual community colleges to customize the training (Shaffer, 2015). Quick Start is credited with helping NCR's successful move from Ohio to Georgia, which included development and testing of a training program even before NCR's official announcement of the move, and Kia Motors' training and pre-hiring for a new manufacturing plant in Georgia (Shaffer, 2015).

South Carolina has offered a centralized workforce training program, now called readySC, since 1961 (Crawford, 2013). It is a free or low-cost customized training program for new or expanding businesses in the state that meet certain criteria and is credited with training over 270,000 employees for more than 2,000 companies as of 2012 (Crawford, 2013). The training is offered through the state's Technical College System, and one of their first client companies was Daimler, which now makes Sprinter vans in the state (Nash-Hoff, 2017).

North Carolina, recognizing the need to address changes in their traditionally strong manufacturing sector, created BioWork, a centrally developed entry-level program for the life sciences manufacturing industry offered via their community colleges (Goldstein et al., 2012). Through this program the state was able to create strong linkages between businesses, community colleges, and research institutions

by blurring the boundaries between companies and educational institutions, by encouraging firms to entrust colleges with greater training responsibilities, by incorporating industry executives into industry expansion efforts, and by using vocational training needs as a shared challenge around which to build industry consensus and, in

turn, for identifying new targets for coordinated institutional support. (Lowe, 2007, p. 352)

This coordinated effort by the North Carolina to allowed the state to assist employees in transitioning from traditional manufacturing industries, which were in steep decline (Goldstein et al., 2012), to new manufacturing jobs while diversifying the economy of the state (Lowe, 2007).

Some of the state-level workforce development programs are coordinated by the local EDOs. The Michigan New Jobs Training Program (MNJTP) was designed as an economic development tool for employers creating a net increase in jobs at a pay scale of 175% of the state minimum wage. It is for use by local EDOs and allows community colleges to offer free employer-specific training to any employer with newly created, higher-wage jobs in the state (Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15). Despite being developed at the state level, all contracts between employers and community colleges are negotiated and executed at the local level (Thiel & Grover, 2013, April 25).

### **Local and Regional Partnerships**

One college district that was able to become an active and trusted community partner in economic development is North Harris Montgomery Community College District (NHMCCD). Through a focus on entrepreneurial relationships and innovative programming, NHMCCD became a key partner in local economic development efforts and formed partnerships with local businesses to ensure workforce training reflected the changing technology and training needs of a variety of employers (Roueche & Jones, 2005). In working with local EDOs, which traditionally are responsible for identifying and recruiting new employers to an area, community colleges can become effective partners in a coordinated economic diversification and development effort (Dyer, 2017a). However, as noted by Gossett (2002), little research into the

collaboration between community colleges and other agencies has been conducted in relation to local economic development, though such research could help increase the success of these partnerships.

For EDOs focused on attracting new businesses or growing existing businesses, Florida (2002) observed the importance of talented and creative people is critical to companies: “it determines where companies will choose to locate and grow, and this in turn changes the ways cities must compete” (p. 6). The opportunity to develop and maintain productive relationships between community colleges and EDOs is strong (Dyer, 2017c) and could have a significant effect on the economy of a region. Kirkwood Community College, in Iowa, is an example of how an engaged community college can, over the long run, impact the effectiveness of economic development in a region. In 1998, Kirkwood initiated a survey of businesses in their area to understand future employee needs, which resulted in a new workforce training program (Roueche & Jones, 2005). As Roueche and Jones (2005) discuss, employers participated in developing this training program and agreed to provide jobs to a portion of the program graduates. The community college followed up on their 1998 study with another study in 2003 and an employment report in 2006, all of which were sponsored by a variety of businesses and EDOs (Roueche & Jones, 2005), reinforcing the Kirkwood’s commitment to economic development in their area and working with their local EDO. There are a number of other examples of community college/EDO partnerships successfully driving both increased employment and business growth of local employers, but the organizations remain very different, are generally measured on different outcomes, have different cultures and value systems, have differing funding streams, and operate in different environments and under different regulations (Conway, 2011).

## **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

### **Critical Success Factor Theory**

Critical success factor theory states that success is based on focusing on a limited number of key areas (Rockart, 1979). The theory was originally developed to define specific information needed by business chief executive officers to be successful in meeting operational and strategic goals (Daniel, 1961; Rockart, 1979). Specifically, critical success factors (CSFs) are “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization” (Bullen & Rockart, 1981, p. 7). CSF theory has been used in a wide variety of organizations, industries, and functional areas: business, information technology, project management, government, energy, customer service, and education (Alexander, 1997; Alpern, 2020; DePrima, 2018; Kayanan, 2012; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2018; Rockart, 1979; Rodríguez-Segura et al., 2016; Trkman, 2010; Warriner, 2005).

Specific CSFs vary across situations, industries, and time, within the same organization and across different organizations (Alpern, 2020). One study on sustainable universities found their CSFs to be

communication, enough time, identification with goals, making sure that the right people are at the table and heard, non-judging attitude, personal strength and persistence, starting on time, stimulate positive feelings, strategy with a goal, support of top-management, tangible objectives, and to find out what people are caring about. (Disterheft et al., 2015, p. 16)

In a study related to university-industry knowledge transfer (globally), the CSFs were understanding customer needs, common goals, understanding intellectual property issues, focus on clear translation, and early technical scoping (Schofield, 2013). Rodríguez-Segura et al.

(2016) argued that developing an exhaustive list of CSFs that meets the needs of all situations and organizations is impossible. Lehman (2016) similarly suggested each organization and situation must develop its own unique set of CSFs. Overall, research suggests that when CSFs are identified and defined, monitoring and managing the progress toward goals can become less challenging and the overall achievement of goals can be more successful.

### **Kanter's Collaborative Advantages**

Despite the difficulty in identifying common CSFs for all situations, Kanter (1994) observed groups of organizations in partnerships and alliances across a variety of countries and industries in the business supply chain had developed some similar CSFs related to collaborative partnerships that led to *collaborative advantages* for each organization. Additional research indicates collaboration by organizations that identified and linked complementary capabilities across the supply chain led to superior performance for those organizations (Fawcett et al., 2012; Fawcett et al., 2008). This idea of a collaborative advantage gained through partnerships has been defined as the incremental gain attributed to outcomes that could not have been achieved by either of the individual organizations alone (Pinnington et al., 2020). However, the level of collaboration between organizations needed to gain a market advantage has been achieved by relatively few companies in the supply chain area (Fawcett et al., 2012; Min et al., 2007), demonstrating the difficulty of successful collaboration in complex organizational arrangements. As Inkpen and Tsang (2005) noted, strategic alliances build trust through behavior and social capital, and to facilitate knowledge transfer, each company within the alliance must behave in a way that signifies trustworthiness. Organizations must also recognize cooperation and knowledge-sharing can enhance their positions, because the existence of an alliance, in and of itself, does not guarantee knowledge transfer (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

For successful partnerships between community colleges and EDOs, the collaborative advantage CSFs may assist in understanding what helps create these successful partnerships (Kanter, 1994). Kanter (1994) observed institutions often are not structured to support collaboration, particularly in the United States (Kanter, 1994). Capozzoli (2020) similarly observed that activities such as learning, research, and the efficient functioning of an organization can be hindered by departmental silos, bureaucratic units, and other organizational structures, which may also act as barriers to interorganizational partnerships.

The CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) in building advantageous partnerships are Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. These CSFs may have differing measures of success depending on the organizations and their alliance goals, but they existed in all successful partnerships that gave each organization a collaborative advantage. Overall, Kanter (1994, p. 100) defines the “Eight I’s That Create Successful We’s” as a true partnership incorporating the following criteria:

*Individual Excellence* – Strong organizations, each with something valuable to contribute to the partnership, approaching the relationship intent on creating a positive outcome.

*Importance* – Prioritizing the relationship as one that will fulfill a major strategic objective with long-term goals and a strong desire to make it work.

*Interdependence* – Complementary skills between the partners, with a need for one another’s strengths to accomplish the important objective.

*Investment* – Partners give tangible demonstration of the importance of the relationship through financial or other resource commitment to the other partner.

*Information* – Open communication between partners, including sharing information critical to the success of the goals such as technical data, evolving situations, possible issue areas.

*Integration* – Tangible linkages between partners to ensure a smooth working relationship at all levels, from the board to the operators, among many individuals. Each partner seeks to both teach the other partner and learn from the other partner.

*Institutionalization* – The relationship is formally recognized by each partner, a decision process is clear, and responsibilities are explicitly stated. The alliance is embedded within each organization and can continue beyond the initial work groups.

*Integrity* – Both partners are honorable in their dealings with one another in ways that build and enhance trust while reinforcing the mutual importance of the alliance.

Alexander (1997) applied this framework to community college interorganizational partnerships between community colleges, businesses, and community stakeholders. Although Alexander did not find all of Kanter's eight CSFs in the relationships studied, the majority were present. Kanter's (1994) work is based on partnerships whereas Alexander's (1997) research focused on a triad relationship between community colleges, specific employers, and various community stakeholders. A triad relationship was not expressly discussed by Kanter (1994) and may have hindered Alexander's ability to uncover the three CSFs not identified.

## **Summary**

The literature makes clear that economic development has been a critical part of local economies for years (Dyer, 2017b). However, changes in jobs and employer needs have increased the importance of this activity in many regions (Donahue et al., 2017). Numerous researchers over the past 18 years (Autor, 2015; Autor et al., 2003; Conway, 2011; Donahue et



al., 2017; Holzer, 2015, April; Jaimovich & Siu, 2014; Leopold et al., 2018) have documented the progressive changes in middle-skills jobs due to technology. These changes have created a shortage of qualified middle-skills workers which community colleges are well-situated to educate and train. By responding to these changing needs, community colleges can fulfill their historic role of providing workforce training for middle-skills workers (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999; Holzer, 2016; Kress & de los Santos, 2014).

In addition, community colleges' activities to provide skilled workers for local businesses, along with their contribution to economic development and local EDOs, is well documented (Conway, 2011; Dougherty & Bakia, 1999; Holzer & Baum, 2017). Over the past 18 to 20 years, community colleges have contributed to local economic development, working with EDOs on projects such as local employer training needs, downtown revitalizations, and entrepreneurship incubators (Dyer, 2017a). Although colleges' work with EDOs is well documented, this researcher found only one study, by Grubb et al. (1997), investigating the role of community colleges in partnering with local EDOs to attract new business into a region to increase the number of middle-skills jobs.

In the next chapter, the methodology used in this study will be discussed. Specifically, community college/EDO partnerships that successfully attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to an area was explored using multiple case studies. These case studies uncovered the elements found within the partnerships that influenced their ability to attract new employers and the organizational elements of the community college that supported these successful partnerships.

## **Chapter 3 - Methodology**

This chapter will review the purpose of the study, the overarching research questions addressed in the study, and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding this study. Also discussed will be the methodology used in the study, the rationale for its selection, and information on the research design, study setting and participants, and instrumentation. Finally, the researcher will review the type of data collected, sources of those data, data analysis and credibility, ethical considerations for this study, and limitations of the study.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the elements of community college and local/regional economic development organization (EDO) partnerships that contributed to successfully attracting new employers with middle skills jobs to an area. It also explored organizational elements in community colleges that help these partnerships succeed.

The primary questions addressed in this research were the following:

1. What are the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and economic development organizations that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to their service area?
2. What programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributed to this partnership that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the area?

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

The theoretical framework used to guide this study is the critical success factor theory, which states that success is based on focusing on a limited number of key areas (Rockart, 1979). critical success factors (CSFs) are “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization”

(Bullen & Rockart, 1981, p. 7). This theory has been used in studies pertaining to business, government, public-private partnerships, and a host of organizations and partnerships to analyze success (Alexander, 1997). The CSF theoretical framework is most appropriate for this study based on the focus used in this theory to identify the few most important areas leading to success (Rockart, 1979) and its application over the past 41 years to a wide variety of organizations.

The conceptual framework that was used to construct the CSFs for data collection and analysis was Kanter's eight "I"s (Kanter, 1994): Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. Kanter observed partnerships and alliances in the business supply chain across a variety of countries to develop these critical success factors leading to collaborative advantages for organizations. This researcher applied Kanter's eight criteria for successful collaborative partnerships similar to Alexander's (1997) analysis of the triad relationship between a community college, businesses, and community stakeholders. In this study, however, the case study focused on two-organization partnerships (i.e. the community college and the local/regional EDO). The data was collected from organizations using semistructured, primarily one-on-one interviews, with interview protocol directed to probe the specific CSFs outlined by Kanter (1994) and additional factors not found in Kanter's research. The specifics of the research design and interview protocol are discussed below.

## **Research Design**

This study was a qualitative multiple case study focused on the partnership between community colleges and their local/regional EDOs, although in one case a state EDO was also interviewed based on the physical proximity and working relationship of the state EDO office and the community college. Quantitative research methods were rejected as an option, as

statistical information would not contribute to the richness and depth of respondent information available in a case study design (Creswell, 2014). A quantitative research problem tends to focus on a few factors to explain the outcome and control for extraneous factors that skew results whereas qualitative research tends to place the problems within the context of a societal, organizational, cultural or other setting (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016). Additionally, qualitative studies are appropriate when the research questions seek to gain an in-depth description of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). As Lochmiller and Lester (2016) have noted, qualitative data yield detailed, thick, robust descriptions, with the ability to capture personal perspectives and experience.

Although “how” and “why” questions are traditionally indicative of the case study method, any method is appropriate in exploratory studies using “what” questions (Yin, 2018), as were used in this study. The qualitative multiple case study method was the most relevant for this study, as it sought to explain contemporary, rather than historical, phenomena and required an extensive and in-depth description of real-world events (Yin, 2018). As Yin noted, historical research deals with non-contemporary events in which those involved are no longer available. Yin also stated that survey research has an extremely limited ability to deal with the context of a phenomenon and experimental research deliberately separates the phenomenon from its context. For these reasons, historical, survey, and experimental research designs were rejected by the researcher. As Schramm (1971) has explained,

the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. (p. 6)

In this study, the decisions and actions related to how the organizations within the partnership work together, why the organizations chose to pursue and support the partnership, and aspects of the partnerships that helped it succeed in attracting new employers to the area were investigated using the selected theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

## **Study Setting**

Sites for this study were selected according to a few critical criteria. First, a partnership between the community college and a local/regional EDO that attracted new employers to the service area existed. The partnerships in this study were established five or more years ago and the colleges were in a variety of locations across the United States, from the East to the Midwest to the West. The economies in each of the study areas were, at the time of the study, either recovering from COVID 19 downturn or already recovered from the economic problems caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, areas' economies were either in transition or recently transitioned from a troubled or undiversified economic base to a diversified, growing, or growth-oriented economic base. The EDOs selected were both regional and local, with one state organization included based on its proximity and working relationship to the community college. The community colleges were mid- to large-sized schools with multiple campuses and no other community colleges in their service area.

Four sites were selected for this multiple case study, rather than one, to provide a more powerful analytic conclusion (Yin, 2018) and to allow for the analysis data from multiple perspectives to improve triangulation between locations. As Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) noted,

adding three cases to a single-case study is modest in terms of numbers, but offers four times the analytic power. Thus, theory building from multiple cases typically yields more robust, generalizable, and testable theory than single-case research. (p. 27)

## Study Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to collect data for this study as it focuses on a phenomena with particular characteristics (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016). Partnerships between a community college and a local/regional EDOs successful in attracting new employers to their area were the sample studied. The researcher studied nine successful partnerships across four community colleges with 20 individuals interviewed from 13 organizations, including nine people from four community colleges and 11 people from nine EDOs. Specific demographics of the participants are discussed in Chapter 4. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, schools are identified by numbers (1 through 4).

**Table 1**

*Study Participants by School*

<i>College #</i>	<i>Number of partnerships</i>	<i>Number of interviews</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>EDO</i>
1	2	4	4	2	2
2	2	4	4	2	2
3	2	5	6	4	2
4	3	4	6	1	5
Total	9	17	20	9	11

The data collected from each participant used semistructured interviews with the partner lead working at the community college and the local/regional EDOs. Partner leads in this study were defined as those directly responsible for development or management of the relationship. The colleges and their partner leads were identified with the assistance of Darlene Miller,

Executive Director of the National Council of Workforce Education and other national community college leaders. The local/regional EDOs were identified by the colleges.

Participants were recruited via email with a 90% recruitment rate.

### **Instrumentation**

Semistructured interviews were selected as the primary protocol for data collection based on their ability to derive in-depth understanding of the partnership phenomenon and the flexibility to gain unexpected insight about the relationship (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016). The semistructured interview protocol was preferred to structured interviews as the researcher was not seeking a large sample nor surveying a representative sample (Adler & Clark, 2008). As Adler and Clark (2008) have noted, semistructured interviews ensure the researcher covers all the key topic areas but can be modified as appropriate for each participant.

The protocol for the interviews about the partnership was developed to address the eight “I”s highlighted by Kanter (1994) and other possible CSFs not accounted for by Kanter (1994). These were open-ended questions using exploratory verbs focused on the phenomenon of the partnerships. Community college participants were asked 14 initial questions (see Appendix A) and EDO participants were asked 13 initial questions (see Appendix B). The researcher used probes such as “tell me more” and “please explain” to elicit relevant and unique data from each participant.

### **Data Collection and Data Sources**

Data for this study was gathered from participant interviews. The interviews were conducted via online video platform (Zoom) due to COVID-19 restrictions between April 9, 2021 and May 19, 2021. All participants agreed to audio and video recordings of their interviews, which allowed the researcher to produce verbatim transcripts and review interviews

as often as required to ensure correct reporting of data. All recordings and other information are being kept in a secure location.

The semistructured interviews followed the interview protocols in Appendices A and B, and were scheduled as one-hour interviews. The interviewer took reflective field notes during the interviews and transcripts were coded using the Kanter (1994) eight “I”s plus “other” for unexpected results. The interviews produced data to answer both research questions in this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were coded based on the eight CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) for collaborative partnerships called the eight “I”s and “other” for items not included by Kanter: Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. More specific coding was added as subcodes under “other” and aligned to the research questions. As Saldaña (2013) has remarked, coding is a necessity, but by not selecting the specific coding method prior to data collection, the researcher can code in a way that will yield the most robust and substantive analysis. The high-level codes were identified as Kanter’s eight “I”s and more specific coding within the eight “I”s were not used. However, coding for other themes were uncovered during data analysis. As this researcher reviewed the interview transcripts, audio files, and video files during the first and second coding cycles, patterns clearly emerged from the raw data and were initially coded to “other”. During this process, the researcher developed sub-codes under the data coded as “other”. The researcher reviewed all coded material a minimum of three times to ensure consistent coding across all interviews. During the coding and analysis process, the researcher used the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software NVIVO. The data analysis followed the coding process.



## **Credibility and Dependability**

The researcher used multiple methods of establishing validity of the study, including triangulation and reflexivity. As Creswell and Miller (2000) note, triangulation, as a validity procedure, entails the researcher using multiple sources of information to form themes in a study. This researcher's analysis of nine partnerships across four geographically diverse schools clearly demonstrates triangulation across multiple data sources. The procedure of triangulation in this study involved the researcher employing "a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The other method used to establish trustworthiness of the study was that of researcher reflexivity. This is "the process whereby researchers report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry" (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Prior to beginning the data collection for this study, the researcher wrote a reflexivity statement (included below) and reflected on the experience, beliefs, and biases that might affect the collection of data. During data collection, the researcher reviewed the reflexivity statement and wrote field notes during and after interviews to establish credibility and dependability of the data collected from interviews. Tracy's Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria (2010) was also used by the researcher to ensure quality in the qualitative study and its findings.

The criteria outlined by Tracy (2010) are (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. The topic is worthy based on the relevance and timeliness of the need to improve the economies in some areas and the ability of community colleges to help in that endeavor. The rigor of the study was demonstrated in the collection and analysis of the data and is supported by a rich theoretical framework appropriate for the study. The researcher has demonstrated sincerity in approaching the study through the reflexivity statement below and supports that sincerity via

transparency during the study. Credibility has been demonstrated in the collection and analysis of the data through thick, detailed description of the data with concrete examples from the interviews. The study will resonate with readers through naturalistic generalizations and transferable findings wherever possible. As discussed in Chapter 1, this study can contribute significantly to knowledge, practice, and policy related to community colleges' role in improving local economies. Ethics will be discussed in the Ethical Considerations section below. And meaningful coherence is demonstrated through the execution and documentation of the study.

As noted above, the researcher developed a reflexivity statement (included in the following section on Ethical Considerations) to assist in addressing potential biases that may affect the collection and analysis of data in this study and the knowledge brought to the study by the researcher's background and experience. In addition to the reflexivity statement, the researcher recorded field notes during and after interviews to further increase the credibility and dependability of the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher followed recognized standards of ethics prescribed for qualitative studies using human participants. For the protection, care, and sensitivity of human subjects, this researcher ensured that informed consent forms were obtained from all participants and that participants were verbally told of the voluntary nature of their participation and their ability to withdraw from the study and/or stop the interview at any time with no questions asked. The researcher also protected participants from harm during and after interviews and maintained the privacy and confidentiality of participants by masking all participant identities and their place of employment in the study. The researcher received Internal Review Board approval for the research prior to collecting data for the study from Kansas State University and each of the

community colleges participating in the study. No Internal Review Board approval was needed from the EDOs but all EDO participants signed the Informed Consent Forms and were informed of their ability to withdraw from the study and stop the interview prior to beginning the interview. All participants were asked for consent to audio and video the interviews prior to beginning the interview. At no point in the research did this researcher practice deception about any aspect of the study. As Yin (2018) emphasized, “The study of ‘a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context’ obligates you to important ethical practices akin to those followed in medical research” (p. 126). Therefore, the researcher maintained full transparency of the research process and progress while protecting privacy of participants. All data have been kept confidential and are housed securely on an external computer hard drive, a method that does not allow for computer hacking or unauthorized access to the data. The external hard drive containing the confidential data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years in a secure location.

Through uncovering and understanding any potential bias, as well as recognizing any experience-based understanding of the research topic, the researcher actively sought to raise the trustworthiness of the data. To avoid the researcher’s biases and preconceived ideas, as well as highlight the useful knowledge and experience of the researcher, that might affect the interviews and data, the researcher developed a reflexivity statement documenting some of the background and experience of the researcher that might bias or aid the collection and analysis of data and describes the steps taken to avoid skewing the data. Reflexivity involves the researcher understanding the background, experience, and world view related to their research and how those can affect the collection and interpretation of data (Berger, 2013): “Reflexivity is the process of intentionally accounting for your assumptions, biases, experiences, and identities that may impact any aspect of your research study” (Lochmiller & Lester, 2016). As the researcher

and research instrument, the researcher used reflexivity to assist in improving the credibility of the data.

### **Reflexivity Statement**

The predominant knowledge I have accumulated during my career is related to business, although I am also a tenured professor with 4 years of full-time teaching experience at a community college. I worked in large and small businesses before joining trade associations that serve specific industries. My experience has given me a preference for action, profit- and efficiency-driven activities, and the removal of bureaucratic barriers when driving success. Much of my early work included the responsibility of completing team projects without authority over those on the team. I developed the ability to understand team member motivation, gain team member loyalty, and have team members complete team activities ahead of their manager's needs. Because of this experience, I am able to empathize with others, gain their trust quickly, and have them share their views honestly. I principally am able to understand those who are in business or are business-minded, but I am also currently a community college professor. This could influence the interviews I conduct with representatives from EDOs and community colleges because, as Berger (2013) has noted, the researcher's experience may shape the researcher-researched relationship or affect the use of language or filtering lens in data collection.

My experience in trade associations primarily focused on interactions with business-member counterparts, but occasionally I was called upon as an industry expert in discussions with government and other bureaucratic organizations to represent the position of businesses. These interactions frequently entailed educating those with little or no business experience on the justification for changes in policy or law. As a community college business professor, I also have

experience in community colleges and understand the world-view, goals, and motivation of those in community colleges. I believe these experiences in working with both businesses, bureaucratic organizations, and community colleges can allowed me to empathize with both partners and elicit a deep level of data by asking follow up questions based on my experience and understanding of the types of organizations within the study.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study begin with the sample size and sample. The small number of partnerships studied is intended to give exemplars of success rather than norms for all partnerships, and thus their practices are not intended to be extendable to all other partnerships. Additionally, the partnerships were limited to community colleges and, primarily, local/regional EDOs and only includes one state-level EDO due to the close proximity and working relationship between the community college and the state EDO. These partnerships are defined as those that have demonstrated success by attracting new companies to the community college's service area and are limited by the knowledge of the researcher and those assisting the researcher in identifying potential participants.

The findings are intended to be an indicator of critical success factors for collaborative, successful partnerships in recruiting new employers to an area. Furthermore, the sample used is based on the knowledge and network of the researcher.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the elements of community college and local/regional EDO partnerships that successfully bring new employers to an area and to uncover the organizational aspects of the community colleges that helped these partnerships succeed. This chapter reviewed the research design for this study, the participants,

instrumentation, and data collection and analysis. It also discussed the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 is a discussion of the research results through the lens of the conceptual framework for this study, and Chapter 5 presents the researcher's findings and recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 4 - Research Results and Analysis**

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected and results of the research through the lens of the conceptual framework used in this study. The chapter begins with a review of the research questions, the study methodology and data validation, and the participant demographics. The researcher then presents an analysis of the data using the theoretical and conceptual theories of critical success factors (CSFs) aligned with Kanter's collaborative advantage (1994) eight "I"'s in partnerships and other CSFs uncovered in this study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the answers to the research questions addressed in the study and a summary of the findings.

### **Research Questions**

This study was designed to understand the critical components of collaborative partnerships between community colleges and local/regional economic development organizations (EDOs) to help communities improve their economic outlook by delivering both economic and workforce growth. Historically, EDOs have focused on building local economies through business incentives, whereas community colleges have focused on building the income potential of communities through workforce development and education. Today, businesses' top priority, particularly when expanding or relocating, is to ensure the building and sustainment of a qualified workforce and an ongoing talent pipeline. This dominant business need suggests that constructive partnerships between community colleges and EDOs have the potential to fulfill the goals of both organizations. To that end, the research questions guiding this study were:

1. What are the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to their service area?

2. What programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributed to this partnership that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the area?

### **Method of Data Collection and Validation**

Data for this study were collected using semistructured interviews with questions designed to elicit information on each of the eight CSF's identified by Kanter (1994) through research on successful, collaborative partnerships in business, and other CSF's not identified by Kanter. Each of the interviews were conducted via online video conferencing software, which allowed for video and audio recordings, with permission of the participant. Most (15 of 17) interviews were one-on-one, which allowed participants to express honest answers to the open-ended questions. One-on-one interviews also allowed the interviewer to ask follow up questions tailored to the individual being interviewed. The interview protocol can be found in Appendices A and B.

### **Participant Demographics**

The researcher studied nine successful partnerships. These partnerships were across four colleges and nine EDOs. The researcher conducted 17 interviews with 20 individuals, including nine people from community colleges and 11 people from EDOs (see Table 2). To protect the confidentiality of the participants, schools are identified by numbers (1 through 4).

**Table 2**

*Study Partnerships and Participants by College*

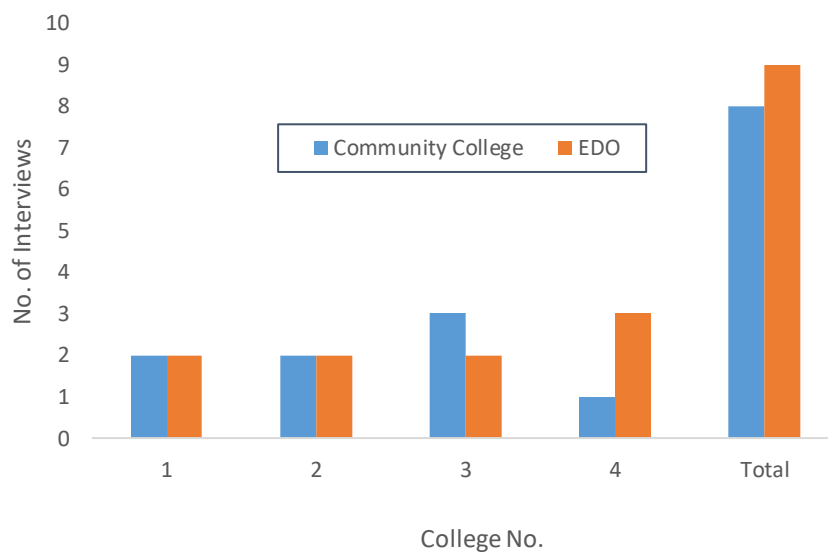
<i>College #</i>	<i>Number of partnerships</i>	<i>Number of interviews</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>College</i>	<i>EDO</i>
1	2	4	4	2	2
2	2	4	4	2	2
3	2	5	6	4	2
4	3	4	6	1	5
Total	9	17	20	9	11



The 17 interviews across four colleges included eight interviews with community college employees and nine interviews with EDO employees. Fifteen of the interviews were one-on-one, one interview had two participants from the same organization, and one interview had three participants from the same organization. Data presented in this chapter are based on interview sessions.

**Figure 1**

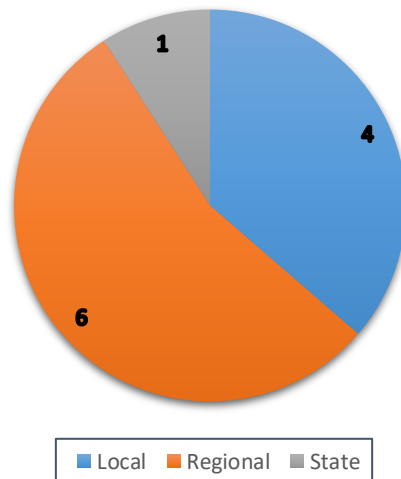
*Number of Interviews by Organization Type by College*



There were three types of EDOs represented in the study, six participants from regional EDOs, four from city or local EDOs, and one from a state EDO.

**Figure 2**

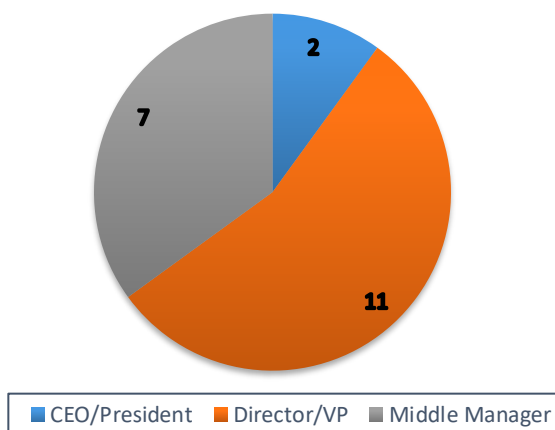
*Number of Participants by EDO Type*



Among the 20 participants, the majority were senior executives, such as Vice Presidents, Executive Directors, or Department Heads, which was defined by those reporting to the ultimate leader of the organization or those leading a department. There were two interviews with CEO/Presidents, defined as ultimate leader of the organization, and seven Director or Manager level participants, defined as those in management positions reporting to a senior executive.

**Figure 3**

*Number of Participants by Job Level*



In all but one organization, interviews were conducted with the person responsible for leading and maintaining the community college/EDO partnership for their organization. There were nine partnerships represented in this data. Eight of the EDO interviews were conducted with the primary executive from the organization responsible for the partnership and four of the college interviews were conducted with the primary executive from the college responsible for the partnership.

### **Eight “I” Critical Success Factors in Participant Partnerships**

This study was guided by critical success factors identified by Kanter (1994) as common across partnerships that resulted in collaborative advantage for each organization. Critical success factor (CSF) theory states that success is based on focusing on a limited number of key areas (Rockart, 1979) and critical success factors are “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization” (Bullen & Rockart, 1981, p. 7). CSF theory has been used in a wide variety of organizations, industries, and functional areas: business, information technology, project management, government, energy, customer service, and education (Alexander, 1997; Alpern, 2020; DePrima, 2018; Kayanan, 2012; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2018; Rockart, 1979; Rodríguez-Segura et al., 2016; Trkman, 2010; Warriner, 2005).

Specific CSFs vary across situations, industries, and time (Alpern, 2020). In a study related to university-industry knowledge transfer (globally), the CSFs were understanding customer needs, common goals, understanding intellectual property issues, focus on clear translation, and early technical scoping (Schofield, 2013). Disterheft et al. (2015), in another study on sustainable universities, found that CSFs included:

Communication, enough time, identification with goals, making sure that the right people are at the table and heard, non-judging attitude, personal strength and persistence, starting on time, stimulate positive feelings, strategy with a goal, support of top-management, tangible objectives, and to find out what people are caring about. (p. 16)

Overall, research suggests that when CSFs are identified and defined, monitoring and managing the progress toward goals can become less challenging and the overall achievement of goals can be more successful. Therefore, understanding the CSFs in collaborative partnerships that are achieving their goals may allow other organizations to achieve similar successes by building and managing these same CSFs.

### **Kanter's Collaborative Advantages**

Kanter (1994) observed groups of organizations in partnerships and alliances across a variety of countries and industries in the business supply chain had developed some similar CSFs related to collaborative partnerships that led to collaborative advantages for each organization. Additional research indicates collaboration by organizations that identified and linked complementary capabilities across the supply chain led to superior performance for those organizations (Fawcett et al., 2012; Fawcett et al., 2008). This idea of a collaborative advantage gained through partnerships has been defined as the incremental gain attributed to outcomes that could not have been achieved by either of the individual organizations alone (Pinnington et al., 2020).

This study examined partnerships between community colleges and EDOs that successfully attracted new employers to their area through the lens of Kanter's eight "I"s (1994). The CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) in building advantageous partnerships are Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration,

Institutionalization, and Integrity. These CSFs may have differing measures of success depending on the organizations and the specific expression of the individual CSFs, but they existed in all successful partnerships that gave each organization a collaborative advantage studied by Kanter.

Kanter (1994) observed institutions often are not structured to support collaboration, particularly in the United States. For this reason, the researcher sought to understand if partnerships between community colleges and EDOs that have successfully attracted new employers to their area demonstrated Kanter's critical success factors within their partnerships.

Alexander (1997) applied this framework to community college interorganizational partnerships between community colleges, businesses, and community stakeholders. Although Alexander did not find all of Kanter's eight CSFs in the relationships studied, the majority were present. Kanter's (1994) work is based on partnerships whereas Alexander's (1997) research focused on a triad relationship among community colleges, specific employers, and various community stakeholders. A triad relationship was not expressly discussed by Kanter (1994) and may have hindered Alexander's ability to uncover the three CSFs not identified.

This study, however, did find all eight CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) across the nine partnerships studied. Additionally, three other CSFs not identified by Kanter were present across all or most of the partnerships, possibly due to the specific types of organizations (community colleges and public EDOs) in this study.

Below is an analysis of the research data for this study. Results are presented by CSF, beginning with Kanter's (1994) Eight I's used as the conceptual framework for the study, followed by the three additional CSFs uncovered by the research during the study. Within each

of the CSF sections below, the researcher presents quotes from some participants that represents data across a number of the interviews.

### **Individual Excellence**

*“Individual Excellence – Both partners are strong and have something valuable to contribute to the partnership. Their motives for entering into the relationship are positive (to pursue future opportunities), not negative (to mask weakness or escape a difficult situation)”* (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

Individual excellence was the most cited CSF in interviews. All participants discussed their respect for their partners in terms of the value they bring to the partnership. Both partners discussed the contribution of the other organization and their continued work together based on the respect they have for the other organization. As one of the EDO directors stated, “we both understand where our specialties are, and we both respect the individual items that we all bring to the table.” This theme of understanding one another’s value to the partnership resonated across all four colleges, along with an overall appreciation of the success delivered through the combination of two strong organizations working together, such as in one community college’s comment: “All the economic development that has happened in [the county], in each individual city, has been the result of the economic development director’s efforts, the city's efforts, the county's efforts, and me at the table with them.”

### **Colleges**

All partners talked about the training and educational expertise of the colleges and the ability of the college to respond quickly and fulfill the training needs of individual employers during the “courting” process of attracting new companies to the area. Most EDO interviews discussed the ability of their partner college to understand and respond to the training needs of

new and existing employers. As was representative of EDO comments, “their expertise and their flexibility, their ability to create a customized training program was instrumental in helping to bring [the new employer] to our area.” Although they admitted having little knowledge of the education program development process, EDOs appreciated the complexity of education and training curriculum development. They understood the unique strengths of their partner college to deliver quality, customized programs to potential employers, “it's no simple task. It takes a good deal of effort, and persistence, and really a kind of innovation to create customized trainings as quickly as [the college] has been able to do.” As one college president noted of their partner EDOs, “they know that at the community college, because education is our business, we're not going to create a lackluster program with a subpar instructor.” This idea was echoed by the partner EDOs.

### **EDOs**

All partners commented on the strength of the local/regional EDOs and the organizational excellence brought to the partnership, but, unlike the colleges, there were a few different opinions on the specific strength of the EDOs. Two of the colleges commented on the EDOs’ ability to convene all the stakeholders and develop productive discussions between the parties,

I think they have the ability to bring together all the players, the state economic development people, the regional economic development people. They know the bankers; they know how to put together business plans and make them work.

Similarly, bringing together stakeholders was also seen to benefit the colleges’ strength in education:

We need business and industry to help create those programs. If we don't know what they need, then we're creating the wrong programs. So economic development does a really nice job of helping us have those connections, so that the programs we create make sense.

Besides being seen as a discussion facilitator, the colleges and EDOs commented on the expertise of the EDOs relative to traditional economic development activities, such as creating cost reduction programs for employers, relocation activities for attracting new employers, etc. One participant noted, “I help people through zoning issues and siting and site planning, all the stuff that you do in economic development.”

## **Importance**

*“Importance – The relationship fits major strategic objectives of the partners, so they want to make it work. Partners have long-term goals in which the relationship plays a key role (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).”*

Most of the participants expressed overarching organizational strategic objectives as being similar between EDOs and community colleges. As one college president said, “If your community grows, your student population grows, you become more robust as an institution.” The EDOs were also unanimous in their understanding of interlocking strategic objectives between the two partners:

Workforce is a critical component of economic development. Not only just maintaining existing workforce or attracting new business to the region but how we develop pipelines of talent and make sure that we're building a pipeline and have the capabilities and skill sets available in our region to support the growth of the existing industries that we have as well as those that we target to grow going forward and want to attract.



For participant organizations, the ability to grow the local economy, whether through attracting new employers, workforce development, increasing the tax base, or other means, was considered a core strategic objective. Both partners, utilizing the individual excellence of the other organization was considered a critical part of meeting their own organizational objective or goal. As one EDO explained:

So, workforce development is a critical component. Everybody's got a site, everybody's got an interstate, everybody's got tax credits, everybody's got grants. But if you can't find the people to do the work that you have, it doesn't matter how many incentives I can provide, or we can provide through our programs, if you can't find people. So, it's become even more critical that we work closely with the community college in those roles.

One community college echoed that thought through a summary of their partnership's approach to workforce and economic development:

As we're assessing labor market trends and in-demand jobs and occupations they (the EDOs) bring, we meet with them to strategically plan together the industry sectors and the occupations we want to focus on in the region to build the pipeline. And then we all commit to responsibilities of what we're going to do to make that happen. Regional strategic workforce work.

### **Colleges**

Community college participants agreed that the partnerships helped the colleges fulfill major goals, including those beyond improved enrollment and securing work for their graduates. In some cases, EDOs assisted their college partners in fundraising, connecting to business executives, program input, and understanding market trends. In at least two communities, the EDO helped bring in new funding for buildings critical to college programs:

They helped us to secure the funds to build our Health Education Center in downtown, which is our Nursing and Health building. And they're helping us currently on a project to do some renovation and building on campus for our mechatronics program.

All four colleges discussed the critical connection to local businesses facilitated by their EDO partners to ensure their workforce and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs continued to offer new and necessary skills to make their students employable. As one college vice president noted:

We have met with them [EDO] at times when we're contemplating a new program we want to develop, seeing if they see the same things we see. Sometimes we will ask for their assistance in helping us to get businesses to the table to talk to us about the program.

The strategic importance of these partnerships is demonstrated by the involvement of the college president in interfacing with the EDO. In all cases, the primary point of contact for the EDOs is either the college president, a direct report to the college president, or a department leader with direct access to the college president, "Presidents that we've had at the college have really understood the importance of aligning with economic development, not just for our workforce or continuing ed departments, but for as the college as a whole."

### **EDOs**

For most EDOs in this study, their core objectives focus on economic growth in their service area. As employer needs have changed over the past few decades, the participant EDOs recognize the overlapping goals between colleges and their organizations:

Our goal is to help businesses expand, and not only help businesses expand, but to help businesses that are already here grow. And so that is our goal. That's our strategic objective. And the only way we can do that is through workforce and education

partnerships like the ones that we have. I think it's funny when economic development talks about incentive structure, about tax structure, about regulatory environment, about all these different things. If you're really going to focus in on meeting your core objectives, which is creating jobs and tax revenue, then the most important relationship to doing that is with education because the most important thing to businesses is workforce. And so, without question, the partnerships with education help us meet our core objectives simply by helping us help businesses to expand and create revenue and create jobs. I think if we were to neglect or not optimize that partnership the way that we need to, then we would be falling down on our core strategy, our core objectives, and our mission and everything that we're held accountable for.

Some interviews also viewed the colleges as helping EDOs fulfill major strategic objectives to improve the overall economic outlook for underserved, underrepresented populations in the community. In one case, the current primary strategic objective cited by the EDO was a social impact bond being developed. The college was an integral part of this bond process because of its ability to develop stackable credentials to help improve economic mobility and decrease intergenerational poverty. In other cases, the EDO highlighted the ability to “level up” the whole community through their partnership with the college:

We try to elevate the economy with the next opportunity. So, in economic development, if we're doing our jobs, we're not promoting \$10, \$12, \$15 opportunities, we're shooting for high wage, high benefit jobs that are going to enhance the livelihoods of the people who are here. We're looking for, as part of our philosophy and our tax structure, big capital projects that are going to invest big dollars here, create a lot of property tax revenue that funds city services and helps offset costs for the community so that we don't

have to keep raising property taxes and we have a wide-ranging portfolio and nice city services. So, our strategy always is to continue to level up. And by having a strong partner who's leveling up the workforce population consistently, as we try to level up the jobs and the technology and the livelihoods of people, if those things correlate, then, you know, you're working up that ladder in a nice, cohesive way.

Overall, the EDOs participating in this research discussed the new realities of economic development and business in which workforce and the talent pipeline are the primary drivers of a business's willingness to relocate or expand:

Talent has become a critical component in businesses as far as their decision making, where they're going to invest. And, without an institution like our community college and their ability to respond quickly to talent needs, in many cases we're out of the game.

## **Interdependence**

*Interdependence* – The partners need each other. They have complementary assets and skills. Neither can accomplish alone what both can together (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

This CSF relates directly to the respect each participant discussed regarding the Individual Excellence of their partner, as well as the Importance of the work done by the partnership. By understanding the reliance each organization has on one another to accomplish their goals, they acknowledge the overall value of their partner. Recognizing their interdependence increases the significance of the partnerships to each organization:

Knowing that the community college is there as a training provider, it's real comforting because, again, workforce development is the number one question folks ask you for.

They figure we can get you electricity, we get you water, we can get you all that, we need a workforce. And it's good to have a training provider like the community college.

These partnerships were viewed by participants as mutually beneficial relationships with each organization contributing to the final outcome based on their unique strengths. They work as a team and willingly contribute to the final outcome on projects, knowing that neither organization alone would get the results demonstrated by the team, or partnership:

We get that their success is our success and vice versa. We're not about taking the credit, we're all about sharing the credit and we're all about the team. We work together on all these projects, and so I think, like them, they're dependent on us, and we're dependent on them to do our jobs well and be successful. So, it's just a mutually beneficial relationship.

### **Colleges**

As education and training specialists, all participants agreed that the colleges brought workforce and talent pipeline development to the partnerships. As these assets have become more important to businesses, the EDOs in this study clearly understood the need for the community college skills to accomplish economic development activity:

We are the first wave of communication with the business attraction effort. But one of the first questions we're always asked, beyond “where's your electricity? Where's the water?” the roads, all the infrastructure questions, is “what about a workforce? Where's the workforce coming from?”

The EDOs' dependence on educational institutions to achieve their economic development goals related to business growth and business attractions was clearly established within the partnerships studied in this research:

The unique thing from [the community college], in my opinion, is the technical expertise, the educational expertise...and how a community college can work directly with an industry to help them with the workforce training that they need. And workforce was

definitely one of those huge boxes that needed to be checked by [the company] to determine if they were going to locate in [our city] or locate somewhere else.

One of the other areas of expertise brought to the partnership by colleges was training dollars, often in the form of grants and funds allocated by the state and administered by the community college. In line with the workforce and education expertise, administering training and workforce funds can be a critical part of business attractions programs developed by the EDOs. In those state where the funds are managed by the community college, this additional interdependence is noted by both colleges and EDOs as part of their partnership success:

We have some job training incentives that only are administered through the community colleges. Any new business coming to the area qualifies for that training incentive. And because we administer it, we get involved very early in new business recruitment as a result of that tool as an incentive to get them here too.

### **EDOs**

The EDOs unique contribution to the partnerships' success was discussed as two different assets or skills, "we're the convener and also a lot of times what we end up doing is we'll offer a tax credit, we'll offer the incentive part of the deal." The primary asset brought to the partnership was unanimously cited as the development of a package of incentives and marketing for the area. The packages usually entail listening closely to the needs of the business and coordination with numerous stakeholders:

We feel like the financial partnership is really, really critical, because people talk about it, and people want to say, well, we can build the best workforce for you, we can build the best talent pipeline when it comes to corporate recruitment, business recruitment, but if

you can't join together and go get money for it, it's just not going to work. And so, we work hand in glove with our educational institutions.

Additionally, many of the EDOs viewed their role in the success of the partnership as translator and coordinator between the needs of the prospective business and the organizations fulfilling the needs of those business prospects:

I think that a reason a lot of these industry partnerships don't work and a lot of industry partners don't want to work with education is because education gets really wonky. And a lot of education partners might get cynical of business.... Education and training providers speak one language and industry speaks another. Sometimes you need those translators to help people understand each other a little bit better. And I think that's where our office has really tried to step in and help communication lines and continue these partnerships forward. But you know, across the country, I've seen where it breaks down because there isn't understanding and there's just frustration, and I think people just feel, “we'll go it alone” when in reality, there's energy you can harness on both sides.

This ability to bridge the differences between academia and business can be a critical component of business attraction when the potential employer places a high level of importance on the workforce pipeline. Some partnerships acknowledged a strong need for this “translator” role, whereas other partnerships did not require the EDO to work in this capacity. The most important aspect of this area of interdependence is a recognition of when this role is needed.

## **Investment**

*Investment* – They show tangible signs of long-term commitment by devoting financial and other resources to the relationship (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

All partnerships studied invested some type of resources in their relationship. For some partnerships, there were financial investments by one organization and human or knowledge resources invested by the other organization. In some relationships, the investments were strictly human or knowledge capital by both organizations. The difference in types of investment by partners were generally based on the state-level rules for workforce funds management and EDO funding. In two states, the community college administered funds for workforce development and employer training, which meant that those colleges used their workforce funding to augment other economic development incentives to help attract new employers. In other states, the EDOs were self-supporting, non-profit organizations in which the colleges were paying members of the EDO:

[The college] is an investor in our organization, so they provide an annual investment.

But other than that, it's really just a collaborative partnership where there's not necessarily a lot of financial exchange, but it's human capital, and things like that in collaboration.

For all the organizations in this research, the primary investment in the partnership is human and knowledge capital, “there's not really any funding going back and forth. It's more I think, a relationship and technical assistance sort of situation.” All participants commented on the time resources spent with their partners on a wide variety of boards, panels, commissions, and projects, “you've got to show up at the townhall meetings. You have to show that you're committed...you've got to be so present that you see the same people all the time, and they see you all the time.” This interaction in many community activities is discussed further in Others below.



## **Colleges**

This study showed the investment by all colleges in the partnership with EDOs relied heavily on human capital. To ensure they were able to meet the employer workforce and training needs discussed through the partnerships, each college devoted a high-level executive and, in three out of four schools, an entire department responsible for delivering value to local and prospective businesses to work with the EDOs. As one college president noted, “...the CEO needs to be at the table the first and second and third times before they hand off the baton.” The three colleges that invested in departments focused on workforce development with specific responsibility for working with the local, regional, and state EDOs were highlighted by their partners. The colleges’ investment in personnel to work with companies on workforce training was seen as important to attracting new business:

I think one of the things that they bring is people who are going to be your guide all the way through the process. When companies are looking at an area, it's confusing enough. They want somebody they know who will answer questions. So, I think dedicated staff is critical.

This investment in staff and executives to work with the EDOs, along with their ability to be agile and nimble, was discussed by all partners as a point of differentiation for the particular colleges in this study. More analysis of this data is discussed in the Others section following.

Besides human capital investment, partners talked about the financial investments made by colleges to support the EDOs:

We support all of our local economic development groups by paying, we're a member of each of them, so we're paying a membership fee for that. And the economic development groups then would support, they don't necessarily support us financially, but they would

support us in terms of bringing the value of being a member of their organization to the college.

Not all of the colleges paid EDO membership fees. In states where the EDOs were part of the city, county, or state governments, financial investment from the college was non-existent:

A lot of this doesn't require financial input from anybody. It's time and investment of staff. You know the Small Business collaborative, the workforce board, just having conversations about directing people to [the college] for potential training, and [the college] being willing and really progressive about reaching out to the industry to try to figure out what they all need.

### **EDOs**

None of the partners discussed direct financial investment from the EDO to the college, but most discussed the influence brought to bear by the EDO on behalf of the college for building programs, training centers, and even dormitories. All EDOs in this study invested staff time and influence to assist the college to improve their ability to develop and offer workforce training and education:

They have helped support the college a number of ways. One is when we renovated an old elementary school to become a satellite campus, the economic development agency was instrumental in helping us with getting business partners to help support that project. So, although that wasn't attracting business to the community, it was seen as a way to attract business because we would have training in the region.

The EDOs view their investments in the colleges as investing in the future economic development of their region. As one of the key resources for local growth, the EDOs in this study

talked about the need for a strong community college in maintaining a strong economy. As one EDO director noted:

We were very involved with helping them construct the dormitory. It's about 10 years old now. We also helped them build the health education complex. I counted up over my career in the area, I got to help the college build four different buildings in three different communities. So, you know, our interaction with the college isn't just about workforce development. It's also about working with the college and making sure they're strong and they can train the next generation of leaders in our community.

This willingness to invest in the colleges' ability to grow also extends to supporting grant proposals, writing letters of support for state and federal funding, and working with business leaders to further support their partner college.

## **Information**

*Information* – Communication is reasonably open. Partners share information required to make the relationship work, including their objectives and goals, technical data, and knowledge of conflicts, trouble spots, or changing situations (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

All participants spoke about the amount and frequency of communication between the partners. As is discussed later in Other, participants in this study spend considerable time together in activities across their service areas. Everyone sits on the same boards, attends the same meetings, presents at one another's board and advisory council meetings, and participates in the same community development activities:

Everybody's on everybody's boards. It is the mechanism that provides our strength in our collaboration that takes place. Everybody knows everybody. We see everybody or talk to everybody on these boards or on these forums more than daily. I could say three or four

meetings I've had today already have been with people who are a part of these boards in one form or fashion. It's what keeps that collaboration going, makes it so we can ask "where does this resource exist?" If we don't know, we just call up somebody and they'll help a business figure something out.

They interact in a variety of ways, which participants say promotes open, frequent communication in formal and informal ways. As one participant explained, with their partner they have "open lines of communication, honest communication. Nobody's hiding from anybody. If I need to get ahold of somebody, I pick up the phone and I call, I can text, and I get a response."

Many participants talked about the use of these formal and informal communication methods to help with organizational priorities and strategies to ensure they are developing assets that will be valuable to the partnership, while recognizing the correlation between their organizational goals and the partnership's goals:

Pre COVID, it was morning meetings, evening meetings, lunch meetings, annual meetings. A lot of those were just touch-base meetings. And then formally, in terms of meetings, we're setting up as we're working on these strategic workforce priorities together, or meetings we're setting up when we're contemplating a new program.

The participants talked about these open lines of communication affording them the opportunity to share business and community intelligence to improve their ability to serve their stakeholders:

We share newsletters back and forth, reports and data. Intel is big. The economic development organizations in our region do synchronous surveys, which is a surveying process where economic developers go out and meet with the head people to ask them a

variety of questions about where they're at in sales, markets, training workforce. When they gather that data, they will meet with us.... At the college, we do a skills survey every three to four years. When we do that, they (EDOs) say, "hey, come and present. We want to know what you found and what you're going to be working on, those types of things."

### **Colleges**

All the colleges invited their EDO partners to be a part of their industry advisory groups, "We have industry sector boards, and they're invited to have a seat at the table for those industry sector boards." These advisory boards were seen as an opportunity for both the college and the EDO to keep current on local business needs related to particular industries:

And then [the college] advisory board regularly convenes for us all to stay in touch on what the college is thinking and to provide input into that. So, there are a lot of two-way communication channels taking place that ultimately result in the best outcome for the companies and for the local economy.

Beyond industry sector boards, the colleges recognize that once a relationship with a business is developed, those businesses may not have the same level of interaction with the EDO. The colleges discussed the importance of sharing their business information with the EDO:

We meet quarterly with our economic development primary partners, the ones that actively recruit new business into the region, to share notes. "Here's what we're hearing", "Here's what you're hearing." Because our training funds also help businesses expand, often with business expansion, we will hear it before the economic developers will. And so then in the quarterly meetings we can say, "Hey, have you met with x lately? We've heard this." "Okay, so we'll call him" that sort of thing.

As the EDOs recognized the Individual Excellence of their partner college in education, the colleges actively shared that knowledge to help EDOs in their work on other areas of economic development. As one college declared:

We do have a lot of workforce data and a really good leader in terms of being a good partner with them as well. [The leader] is always very up on what's coming up in education and will share with them. I think they appreciate and respect her knowledge of the subject matter, both locally and at a national level. I think they know that she can bring that different perspective as well, that helps build the relationship.

The only unfavorable comments from colleges on information sharing were related to the confidentiality of potential businesses investigating the area. All colleges commented on the difficulty of preparing proposals for business when they have little or no information on the specific business. Many businesses interested in (re)locating to a new area required EDOs to keep their names confidential. The colleges understood that the prospective businesses were requiring that level of confidentiality, but they all commented on the effect of not being given that information when preparing a training proposal:

It's one of the things that makes it very challenging. You're putting together a training proposal with a blindfold on because you just have no idea really. Maybe they're saying, well, it's an aviation company. That means aviation parts? What does that mean? And so, I try to ask more questions, and they try to deflect because they don't want to tell me too much. But, there's only a limited amount they can tell because it needs to be secret, and some companies much more so than others.

Despite not being given all the information they need to develop employer-specific training programs in some instances, all of the colleges understood the EDO's inability to share

businesses names and other identifying information. The trust between partners in this study was reflected through this understanding.

### **EDOs**

The EDOs commented on the willingness of their college partners to listen to new ideas from the EDOs and their businesses clients. The ability of the college partners to be responsive and open helped EDOs work to improve the community:

I've had some harebrained ideas, and I would not hesitate to just put them on an email and send them over to [the college president] and say, "what do you think?" or "is there somebody I could speak with; point me in the right direction, I'll take it from there." And vice versa there. It's a two-way street in information and idea sharing.

Additionally, the EDOs talked about their trust in the college partner to work directly with business clients. As they pointed out, once the decision is made by the business to locate in the area, training and education decisions by the companies have little impact on the EDOs. To keep plans progressing, the college often works solely with the business, but EDOs felt confident in the college updating them as appropriate. As one college noted:

Another example, I think, is even after the new business recruitment hits a certain point, typically when they say they're coming, we don't even go through the economic development group anymore. We just keep what they need from us moving forward. We certainly keep our partners updated.

### **Integration**

*Integration* – The partners develop linkages and shared ways of operating so they can work together smoothly. They build broad connections between many people at many organizational levels. Partners become both teachers and learners (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

Each participant described broad linkages between the partners, in part because of the small size of most EDOs and partly due to the overlapping nature of each organization's work. Because these partners need each other to accomplish their goals, they built connections between their organizations to ensure a smooth exchange of information and ideas:

Those economic government agencies are very small. I mean, most of them have three or four employees. You know, they're very, very small. So yeah, we're talking to everybody. I mean, we've pulled in faculty, we've pulled in some of the associate Dean's, we've pulled in our provost, you know, when it's been needed or would help.

Some of these linkages are formal, such as sitting on each other's boards and advisory groups and some are informal or project based. For all participants, integration extends beyond work on business attraction to data sharing, solution brainstorming, community growth, and more:

We're all related, not only to the business community, but to the economic development community and to the education community. There are very few people to do all the things, so we just pitch in. Like I said, anytime there's a board or an initiative or something that's happening, you inevitably all get put on the same panel, whether it be a temporary or a permanent thing. That's just how we operate.

Participants are dedicated to improving their community, not just their organization, so these partnerships have extensive integration across areas not traditionally the responsibility of either the college or the EDO. As one college noted:

We really do talk to them about new program creation. Like I said, we serve on the same kinds of boards. And you know, we are on lots of committees together, like the downtown revitalization committees, those kinds of things. We had a poverty reduction initiative in the city that we helped with.



Informally, the integration was discussed in terms of the ability to call one another for resources, help, and ideas. Funding and control of funds for economic and workforce development varied by state but the integration on boards related to the funding did not. If the EDO was in control of the funds, they had college employees on their board. If the college was in control of the funds, they had EDO employees on their board. Partners did not use the control of funds to build a power position in the partnership. In all cases, the partners worked together to use the funds to improve the economic and workforce position of the area:

[The college] has a center in [the city] and we are in discussions about putting the business service portion of our grant with the Small Business Development Center (operated by the college) there. And in that space, separate from our job center where folks look for work, this will be where businesses can hold hiring events, job fairs, and all that. The focus there would be on the business community and leveraging resources between the Small Business Development Center that the school has to offer and what our grant brings.

### **Colleges**

Both colleges and EDO participants discussed the differences between college operations and businesses way of operating. For participant colleges, they invested in personnel committed to working with EDOs on delivering workforce development programs tailored to business needs whenever possible. Part of this integration with EDOs includes helping them to understand when and why colleges might not be able to deliver on program or timing needs for the potential employers. As one EDO explained:

When I think what a really good education provider does, I think they teach people in economic development and educate people in economic development so those in

economic development know what constraints education is working with. I think this is one of the areas where people get really, really frustrated working with each other because they feel like it is just bureaucratic. [The college] does a really good job explaining to us, educating us and saying, “look, here are the constraints.”

This same partnership, as with all the other partnerships in this study, work to overcome as many educational constraints as possible to deliver programs that meet individual business and industry needs. The EDOs integrate the colleges into their business attraction systems to ensure all possible resources are brought to the recruitment effort:

And anytime we set up, let's call it a familiarization tour, which is a part of the recruitment process in bringing in a new company, we set up a series of meetings and [the college] is always in that formal setting, you know, talking about [customized training], and that's one thing that's added a lot of value as well, in terms of what we do.

This added value by the college to the local economic development activities was in place in all the study participant colleges. The investment in executive level personnel to work with EDOs in improving the local economy was discussed as a major source of partner integration between the college and the EDO. As one EDO expressed:

Just making the connections between industry and the plans that we have with some of our workforce development programs that we'd like to create can help exponentially grow our healthcare innovation plans. It's really great having a community college partner that is willing to expand and grow easily and recognizes the needs of the industry and has the personnel and the ability to scale.

## **EDOs**

The colleges also appreciated the openness to integration demonstrated by their EDO partners. The colleges lamented the speed under which EDOs generally operated due to their need to respond to potential business clients, but their efforts to include the college in the business attraction process as early as possible was valued:

And so then, if a business or industry contacts one of the economic development directors, I'm usually the second point of contact, and when they entertain them, when they bring them in to court them, I'm usually there at that meeting. They always call me in to their core team meetings.

## **Institutionalization**

*Institutionalization* – The relationship is given formal status, with clear responsibilities and decision processes. It extends beyond the particular people who formed it, and it cannot be broken on a whim (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

Of all the CSF's identified by Kanter (1994), Institutionalization had the least complete application to these partnerships. Despite most of these partnerships having deep and wide connections between organizations, none had formal, written agreements between the partners, none had formal policies and procedures or decision-making processes between partners, and one college was still in the process of developing a culture of cooperation and partnering with EDOs. However, as has been discussed previously, all partners serve on one another's boards and committees, all have open, frequent communication between partners, and all have tremendous respect for the individual excellence brought to the partnership by the organizations:

There are lots of committees and lots of meetings that go on in between. There're meetings that happen every month that individuals at the college participate in, like our

president sits on one of the boards or vice presidents on another. But then we also have our newsletters that go out to our economic development groups to make sure they're aware of everything that's going on. We have industry sector boards, where they're (EDOs) invited to be at the table. And then just sometimes if something comes up, we will call them up or send them an email to see if they can assist us.

The formal status of these partnerships, for three of the four schools, exist through voluntary or state-mandated board seats allocated to the organizations. In one case, the partnership has existed for many decades, but grew stronger after the state developed a funding program that helped tie the work of the community college and the EDOs to one another:

We got this program legislated in the state in 1983, and that's really what started to spur very strong relationships with the economic development organizations. Prior to that, certainly we had partnerships, and we were at the table, but it really propelled us into a much closer working relationship with the economic development organizations.

Based on the board and committee responsibilities tying the organizations to one another, the partnerships have, or will likely continue beyond the person with the primary interface responsibility in each organization. Two of the colleges and all of the EDOs have experienced personnel changes over the past few decades but continue to maintain the collaborative partnership:

So, at [the college], strategic business partnerships are a high priority. In our strategic plan for the college, community outreach is a strategic priority. So, is there a policy on it? No. But it is a practice, which will stay well past my retirement, as it was before I took this position 11 years ago. That's just how it has been and, I would say, we really turned the tide on that priority in the late 70s.

From the EDO's perspective, the institutionalization was equally ingrained in the organization without having formal written partnership agreements:

We're investor funded, and so we always have a seat for the college. We currently have the president of (one of) the [college] campus. We have two campuses in the area sit on our board right now. And then [the vice president] has been a board member for years. So, they're integrated into our work.

### **Colleges**

Although there are no formal written partnership agreements, each of the colleges has institutionalized the relationship by dedicating an executive with clear responsibility for the partnership with EDOs. This is discussed in more detail following in Others section, but this demonstrable commitment to the partnership is a critical factor in the relationship, from the EDO perspective:

You've got to have the decision makers on the frontline as much as possible. And certainly in [our contact's] case, he has the ability to make decisions or get decisions back quickly. And, you know, if we had to wait 3 or 4 weeks or a month or 2 months, for a response, that would be really detrimental. But being able to move "at the speed of business" is really important.

One of the colleges in this study, nationally known for workforce development programs, believes their ability to form these strong relationships with EDOs stems from consistent internal commitment of the presidents over time:

I think it goes back 20 plus years, when we had some fantastic leaders at [the college] who saw what our role could be within economic development and workforce, and understood that in order to achieve the things that we wanted to achieve, we needed to be

a trusted partner at the table with these economic development individuals. And so, developing those relationships way back, I think, has enabled us to continue to be where we are today.

### **EDOs**

The EDOs commented on the broad ties between their organization and the college. They value the direct contact and commitment of senior executives at the college, but they also rely on interaction with various parts of the college to be able to accomplish the goal of improving the overall economy of the community:

We have regular communication, not just with [our primary executive contact]. I always say good relationships with organizations aren't just head of firm to head of firm, right? It's broad, and so, I have a relationship with many of the people that work for [our primary executive contact]. I have a relationship with [our primary executive contact's] boss. I have relationship with the Dean of the technology school and people that work for that person, and some of the professors at the college. I mean, it is really broad and wide, because there's value propositions and all of that.

### **Integrity**

*Integrity* – The partners behave toward each other in honorable ways that justify and enhance mutual trust. They do not abuse the information they gain, nor do they undermine each other (Kanter, 1994, p. 100).

All participants expressed great trust in their partner and demonstrated that trust through sharing information and seeking input on strategic programs and activities. As Inkpen and Tsang (2005) noted, strategic alliances build trust through behavior and social capital, and to facilitate knowledge transfer, each company in the alliance must behave in a way that signifies

trustworthiness. Organizations must also recognize cooperation and knowledge-sharing can enhance their positions, because the existence of an alliance, in and of itself, does not guarantee knowledge transfer (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005).

A participant from one college, whose leader was building alliances with local and regional EDOs, expressed the attitude of each college toward building trust in the partnerships:

I think there's a lot of trust, and it was built by me being at the table and delivering what I said I was going to deliver. That's how you build trust. When I first came here, there wasn't a lot of trust. I remember [a partner] sat in my office with his arms crossed, said, we've heard this from the college before. And I said, fair enough. And now he gives me a big hug, because we deliver. That's what we do. That's how you build trust. And they know they can count on me. They know they can call me. They know I'm going to get the [job] done. I mean, you don't have a partnership if you don't follow through.

All partners talked about building trust through action, follow-up, and open communication. By proving, day after day, project after project, that the partners followed through on their commitment, shared information, and were transparent with their partners, organizations in this study built trust with their partners.

### **Colleges**

The colleges understood that trust comes from partner relationships built on more than direct business attraction program. Partners must want to cooperate with one another to develop the trust in the partnerships:

I think our work together has gotten better because we've taken the time to build those relationships. I think there were other people in my position who didn't play well together

in the sandbox. I think it was seen much more competitively. I look at it as “it takes a team” and if I can be part of that team, that's great.

In addition to those directly interacting with the EDOs, the participants recognized that they also need the support internally at their college. The primary contacts for the EDOs from the college noted that without the resources from the college, they could not build productive, trustworthy relationships with their partners:

I think you have to have buy in from those that lead. I love my role, but at the institution, I have a provost and the president and a cabinet that believe in us, they believe in what our role is for the community, so it's not very often that I go to them and don't get what I need in order to make that happen.

Participants also talked about the college’s ability to work independently with prospective businesses to develop the necessary workforce training solutions and the EDO partner’s trust in them to share information and keep the organization updated on the actions:

I follow through on the relationships that get established in the new business recruitment cycle, because they (the EDOs) can't handle everything. You leave that (prospecting) meeting with certain things we have to follow up on. And by doing that, the economic development group knows they can trust that they don't have to micromanage us and we know how to keep them informed. And vice versa. They don't have to be in every future meeting we have with this prospective new company, because they know we're going to handle it appropriately and let them know if something comes up

### **EDOs**

From the EDO perspective, they appreciate the reliability of their partner college and the work their primary contact from the college invests in the relationship. Because many EDOs are



government agencies or work closely with the local and regional governments, they value the type of relationship they have with the college versus what many other organizations have with government agencies:

I think we see this a lot in other types of partnerships throughout government, where something goes wrong and everyone wants to stab each other in the back. But with [the college], I think it was both sides saying, well, not everything went great, but we had each other's back and we were willing to say, okay, you know, problems come up. But instead of just throwing people under the bus, it was “how do we actually meaningfully work through those.” We saw what [our college partner] was willing to do within the institution. We knew that he was willing to move mountains, and I hope he saw the same thing on our side, that we were never going to throw each other under the bus. Instead, it was, “we were going to trust each other.”

### **Other Success Factors in Participant Partnerships**

In addition to the eight CSFs identified by Kanter (1994), there were three other areas identified by partners as CSF. These three other areas are 1) having multiple areas of interaction between the partners beyond the business attraction work, 2) having a single, executive level decision-maker at the college focused on the partnerships, and 3) flexibility/speed/agility by the college. Although not all interviews cited these CSFs, they were discussed in all but one of the interviews with no specific prompting by the researcher.

### **Multiple Areas of Interaction between Partners**

The partnerships in this study involved significantly more areas of interaction than business attraction and often more than growing businesses in their area. Although interaction between organizations was not specifically addressed by the researcher except in the area of

communication, most of the interviews included discussions of different types of interaction between the partners. Both EDOs and colleges recognize that the strengths of each organization work together to build overall area economic prosperity and improve each organization. In fact, 15 of 17 interviews discussed the variety of interactions between organizations beyond business attraction:

I would say that we look at each other as not only an entity that can provide stuff but that can give stuff as well. These relationships need to be seen as two-way. We go to them for grants because these are part of our lifeblood, but when they come to us, we have to be open to fulfilling their needs as well. It's understanding that these relationships are so symbiotic that we need to help each other to gain from each other.

Some of these interactions involved board and committee membership across various community groups:

Anytime there's a board or an initiative or something that's happening, you inevitably all get put on the same panel, whether it be temporary or a permanent thing. That's just how we operate.

In some cases, partners worked together on a variety of local business initiatives that use each organization's strengths to improve the economy. One example included helping businesses during the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020:

COVID was just hitting us. We were trying to figure out how we could better support our smaller businesses and we reached out to [the college president] and their team. We brought in the SBDC, and then before we knew it, the group grew to include chambers of commerce from [other towns] and ours, of course, and the economic development representatives for those communities. So, that was a group effort.

Other examples of the extent of interaction between partners included information sharing, grant writing, equity and inclusion projects, and even facilities funding. At the heart of the work these partners did together was their community and a common goal to support and improve their community. As one EDO director stated, “You could reach out to county leadership, community college leadership, and if something comes up, we all band together for the good of the community.”

### **Executive Decision-Maker as a Single Point of Contact**

In eight out of nine EDO interviews, their primary contact at the college was mentioned frequently as the catalyst for the ongoing work of the partnership. The compliments and accolades showered on their contact by the EDO was impressive. In some cases, it might be possible to confuse the college partnership with a personal partnership:

Since [the new president] has come on board, you'd be hard pressed to find somebody who doesn't have a lot of positive things to say about what [the president] has done. Very open and very accommodating to the business community. [The president] has really just taken this and flipped it to where we have no issue promoting [the College]. We work very closely with them. We have access to their deans. We coordinate our workforce training needs. It is just a really solid relationship when it comes to that.

For three of the colleges in this study, having a department empowered to respond to workforce needs and nurture the EDO partnerships with a leader who “has a seat at the table” of college leadership was considered distinctive and a significant value for the local economy:

My previous job was at a business attraction organization in [another state]. I came from [an EDO] which is very similar to [my current EDO]. In [my previous state], we didn't have a program like that (at the community college). We tried to kind of put them

together in an ad hoc fashion as we were doing business attraction projects. We'd talk with the company and then we'd try to cobble together some community colleges or universities to build programs. The fact that [my community college partner] has a program and resources to actively respond to these things, it's just it's a value prop. It's a way that [my current state] distinguishes itself from other regions.

Table 3 shows how one set of partners in their separate interviews talked about this dedicated department with a high-level college decision-maker at its head within the college.

**Table 3**

*Interview Comments by College/EDO Partners on the College Workforce Decision-Maker*

<i>College</i>	<i>EDO</i>
I was asked to put together this division so that we would have a centralized point of contact for our workforce responsiveness. It started with one initiative, and then really grew from there. I'm appointed by our president and provost as the representative for certain organizations...to create the key collaborations externally, to represent the college with our external partners and provide a single source of contact, an office to respond to industry and workforce needs.	You've got to have the decision makers on the frontline as much as possible. And [the department leader] has the ability to make decisions or get decisions back quickly. If we had to wait three or four weeks for a response, that would be really detrimental. Being able to move "at the speed of business" is really important. And so without question, I think that structure is critical. People need answers quickly. Having decision makers that are on the front line is really important.

### **Colleges**

Those within the colleges in this research mentioned the advantages for the college of having a responsive, dedicated decision-maker leading the partnership with EDOs: "Presidents that we've had at the college have really understood the importance of aligning with economic development, not just for our workforce or continuing ed departments, but for the college as a whole." This prioritization of resources is not necessarily unique to the colleges in this study, but it also is not common across the majority of community college in the United States. There are

some states using this model that have shown tremendous success in business attraction and economic development. College leaders in this study acknowledge the value of this organizational design:

I think [the department leader's] role is so important at the college to make known that she's a senior staff member, not a subset of the provost. That this person sits at the table because both the provost and the director of workforce education are really the key drivers of the college's workforce responsibility. As the community college shifts, that person needs to be involved at the highest levels. You see this in areas like Texas, Tennessee, Florida. All those states recognize that the role needs to be a senior leadership position.

Those in the role of primary lead at the college for the EDO partnerships discussed the access and advantages their position brings:

I think that me sitting on the senior team helps with that (EDO partnerships) because it means that I have easy access to the President. If a question comes up about something like that, I can just text [the President] and say, "Hey, do you have a few minutes, I need to talk to you about this."

And, as another workforce department lead explained, "I report directly to the President. I think that's big in organizational structure. I think that limits a little bit of the shadow college notion when you're at the cabinet level."

### **EDOs**

The partner EDOs also expressed the importance of having an empowered contact from the college to help drive workforce and economic development in their area:

The fact is, everybody says how lucky we are to have that single division within the community college and not have to rely on going to the deans or the President to say, “Hey, can you help us out?” [The college president] has a million things that are on her hands, and the fact that we have a direct contact with the team to build out those needs for businesses is a resource that not everybody has in their community colleges.

As another EDO said:

The fact that they have a specific department with five or six employees that work with [the department leader], dedicated to making those connections and in providing the resources, I think that's super beneficial.

### **Flexibility, Speed, and Agility by Colleges**

Both colleges and EDOs commented on the unique ability of the community college to work at the speed of business. As one college commented, “Our motto is education at the speed of industry.” Despite having no questions or references made by the researcher during the interviews, 13 of the 17 interviews spontaneously used the exact words “nimble”, “agile” or “flexible” to describe the college in their work with the EDOs. Beyond those specific words, 16 of the 17 interviews discussed the ability of the colleges to react to the needs of industry or the EDOs quickly and to be agile in their work. As one college president explained, “On that side of the house, it's so important to be nimble on your feet, get the quality curriculum developed, get the good instructor in there, and get the program out.”

In relation to business attraction, EDOs stated that this ability of their college partners to be flexible and quick in program development for employers is a key competitive advantage for their area, “without an institution like [the community college] and their ability to respond quickly to talent needs, in many cases we would be out of the game.” This agility was also seen

as a differentiator between four-year institutions and community colleges, with EDOs preferring to bring their community college into workforce development discussions with potential employers:

They have capabilities that align more specifically with developing skills in some of the high demand careers and so they become a critical asset in our ability to attract new business and support existing industry here. In their ability to adapt to new skills or upskilling requirements, they just seem to be a little bit more nimble and agile versus traditional four-year institutions.

This ability to meet employer training needs was seen by the community colleges in this study as a significant asset, particularly in comparison to most other higher education organizations. “You know, higher ed isn't known to be nimble. And, the one thing that I think that we bring to the table is an ability to be nimble and responsive to industry needs.”

### **Colleges**

Both the colleges and the EDOs commented on the perceived difference between “most colleges” and their partner. The colleges in this study recognized the different actions and attitude they bring to the EDO partnership relative to other colleges:

You have to partner and you have to check your ego at the door. The college is really intentional about how we redesign programming from the ground up to meet employer needs, rather than our old model of, well, “we offer this program, and our students can go through it, and we just know they'll have the skills you want.”

On the EDO side, they talked about their college partner's understanding of business and their agility versus traditional universities:

I think their uniqueness is their ability to respond quickly. Not many colleges or university systems can claim that. You've got, in many cases, professors and teachers who have never really been in a real-world business setting. Not only the talent [the college] has attracted on their professor side - many of them have run their own businesses - but their general understanding of the need to be able to respond quickly is the critical part.

Both partners understand the work it takes for the colleges to be agile and flexible. The unique latitude given to the department within the college focused on workforce development and EDO interface is recognized as valuable for success of the partnership:

Their prerogative within the school is to be flexible and adaptable. They will pull from different departments for an education program. If they need to, they can contract from outside to provide whatever it is the employer needs. So, first of all, the fact that they're there, and they exist, and they have the resources to staff it is important. But then the power that they've been given within the college is to adapt to the needs of whatever that company needs and to be flexible. Not every academic organization has that kind of flexibility.

### **EDOs**

Colleges in this study expressed the importance of being flexible, quick, and agile to support the partnerships with their EDO. They understood EDOs are at the mercy of prospective businesses and often are required to produce results with little lead time. Because of that lack of control on the part of their partners, relevant departments in the college prioritize requests of EDOs:



They get very little lead time. It's high pace. There's a lot of pressure by these employers to “get us deals, get us incentives.” They (the EDO) may get a call on a Monday that says, “I'm going to be there Thursday, show me a site.” And that's why most of the time it's a phone call or a text to my personal cell phone to be available. They're at the mercy of an employer. That's how these economic development directors work.

This ability to adapt and move quickly was seen as different from most educational institutions and stemmed from an attitude at the top of the organization:

Economic Development directors in a county or city are hired with the expectation of recruiting X number of employers, so their bread and butter comes from that. Education has to adapt to work in that world. And that's probably why college presidents haven't been responsive, because that's not how our world works. It takes a year to get curriculum through. “You want to meet with me, you have to schedule that a month out.” “Don't call me on a Saturday or Sunday, or at night.” The two worlds are colliding here and the economic development world is not going to change to adapt to you. We have to adapt to it to be successful as partners.

## **Research Question Results**

Data collected during the study answered both research questions, with results presented through the lens of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning this study. The research centered on answering the following two research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to their service area?
2. What programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributed to this partnership that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the area?

## Research Question #1

Characteristics of partnerships between community colleges and EDOs able to attract new employers to their area were analyzed using the critical success factor theory, specifically focusing on those found by Kanter (1994) in collaborative partnerships around the world. The study showed Kanter's Eight I's plus an additional CSF were all part of the partnerships in this study.

Table 4 summarizes the findings of what community colleges and EDOs believe they bring to the partnership and their joint perspective on their work in the CSFs. Responses from the colleges were remarkably similar to one another within each of the CSFs, demonstrating the ubiquity of these CSFs in building and maintaining partnerships with EDOs among these research participants. EDO's responses were also consistent among participants.

**Table 4**

*RQ #1 Summary of Findings by CSFs of Each Organization's Contribution to the Partnership*

<i>Critical Success Factors</i>	<i>Community College</i>	<i>Economic Development Organization</i>	<i>Joint Perspective</i>
Individual Excellence	Training and educational programs at the speed of business	Bringing together stakeholders Creating business incentive programs	Mutual respect for each other
Importance	Growing enrollment Securing jobs for graduates	Expanding businesses Economic growth in their area	Growing the community
Interdependence	Workforce development Build talent pipeline Workforce training funds, in some cases	Bringing together stakeholders Creating business incentive programs	Respect for one another's work Helping their partner achieve success
Investment	Primarily human capital through dedicated departments and/or high-level decision makers Investing in EDO, in some cases	Influence in driving investments into college facilities and projects Business consulting on college programs	Human and intellectual capital in the form of expertise and dedicated individuals

<i><b>Critical Success Factors</b></i>	<i><b>Community College</b></i>	<i><b>Economic Development Organization</b></i>	<i><b>Joint Perspective</b></i>
Information	Sit on partners boards Serve on many of the same committees and projects Share intelligence and ideas	Sit on partners boards Serve on many of the same committees and projects Share intelligence and ideas	Open, frequent communication strengthens collaboration
Integration	Executive leadership involvement Broad interaction across areas of the college Educate EDOs on college constraints	Broad interaction across whole organization with the college Educate college on speed of business demands	Share information and ideas Work together on a variety of initiatives
Institutionalization	Development of a dedicated department, in most cases Management of workforce training funds for businesses, in some cases Sit on partners boards Serve on many of the same committees and projects	Sit on partners' boards Serve on many of the same committees and projects	No formal partnership agreements or decision-making processes Broad connections across both organizations
Integrity	Fulfilled commitments consistently Worked at the speed of business Open in communication with partner Viewed partnership as cooperative not competitive	Open in communication with partner Viewed partnership as cooperative not competitive	Solid trust in partners' ability and expertise Open communication with partner Viewed partnership as cooperative not competitive
Multiple Areas of Interaction between Partners	Work on multiple boards and committees together Part of local community initiatives	Work on multiple boards and committees together Part of local community initiatives Assist partner with grants	Band together for the good of the community

## **Research Question #2**

The research clearly showed two factors present in all of the colleges within this study that were cited by each of the partners as critical programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributing to the partnerships that attracted new employers to the area. These specific programs and practices are not part of all community colleges and were discussed by participants without specific mention by the researcher. None of the prompt questions in the

interview protocol mentioned these areas specifically but all partnerships spent a significant amount of time in the interviews connecting these CSFs to the partnership success.

Each college had a senior executive focused on their work with the EDOs. This senior executive served as the single point of contact for the EDOs, was empowered to make decisions on the part of the college in their work with employers and EDOs, and had an understanding of both business and the community college to fulfill the employer's needs. Three of the colleges also had an entire department, led by the senior executive, dedicated to workforce development and training.

All of the colleges also focused on working “at the speed of business” within the partnerships with EDOs. Their practices extended the overall work of the college into an ability to be flexible, fast, and agile to meet the needs of employers and potential employers. Table 5 summarizes these unique aspects of the colleges in the study to deliver programs that meet the individual needs of employers and EDO partners.

**Table 5**

*RQ #2 – The Programs, Policies, or Practices at All Colleges in the Study Discussed by Partners*

<i>Critical Success Factors</i>	<i>Community College</i>	<i>Joint Partner Perspective</i>
Executive Decision-Maker as a Single Point of Contact	Single point of contact for EDO Decision-maker focused on EDO partnership and business interaction Dedicated department for workforce development and talent pipeline, in most cases Top-level support within college	Area able to design and execute workforce training programs quickly without extensive red-tape at college
Flexibility, Speed, and Agility by Colleges	Willing to work at the speed of business Willing to try new things Able to bring together unique training programs for individual employers Top-level support within college	Area able to differentiate itself based on college's flexibility, speed, and agility in workforce training development

## **Summary**

This chapter began with a review of the research questions for this study, the study methodology and data validation, and the participant demographics. The researcher then presented the data from the multiple case study of partnerships between community colleges and EDOs that had successfully attracted new employer to their area. The findings, organized using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks unpinning this study, highlighted the 11 CSFs found in all of these partnerships. The researcher then discussed the answers to the research questions found in the study's data. The study uncovered the CSFs outlined by Kanter (1994), and three additional CSFs, were present in all of the community college/EDO partnerships in this study. The presence of nine of these CSFs addresses research question one of the study, highlighting the characteristics of the partnerships that successfully attracted new businesses to their area. The other two CSFs found in the research addresses research question two, as they are unique to the community colleges in this study. Chapter 5 provides further analysis of these findings relative to the research questions, implications for community college/EDO partnerships, recommendations for further research, and researcher's conclusions.

## **Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter begins with a review of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding this study. It then highlights the study methodology, data collection and analysis, and significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study findings, their implications, recommendations for future research, and researcher's conclusions.

### **Problem Overview**

In relation to economic growth and business competitiveness, Shaffer (2015), a Senior Fellow at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, wrote, “The most widespread, and arguably the most important, way in which higher education institutions help support the competitiveness and growth of employers in their communities is through worker training programs” (p. 67). Shaffer further observed that many states focus delivery of job-specific training to employers through community and technical colleges.

Located within driving distance of almost every community in the United States, community colleges conveniently provide access to low-cost, universally accessible education and training to all adult learners (Baime, 2019). Traditionally focused on building middle-skills workers, community colleges assist employers in filling a labor gap not usually satisfied by university graduates (Holzer, 2016). Over half of all jobs in the United States are middle-skills jobs, and middle-skills jobs are evolving from routine jobs, many of which have been shifted offshore or primarily automated and reduced to low-skills jobs, to “newer” middle-skills jobs requiring more technical, administrative, or communicative skills (Holzer, 2015, April). These new, middle-skills jobs often go unfilled due to a mismatch of labor supply and demand by geography or a dearth of qualified, skilled candidates (Tovar, 2020).

Historically, economic development organizations (EDOs) have used tax incentives, cash grants, and other cost-minimizing tools to drive business growth and investment (Zheng & Warner, 2010). Some state and local EDOs, however, recognize businesses' growing need for a qualified workforce and are incorporating training and education tools into their incentive programs (Shaffer, 2015). Despite studies showing the long-term value of education and infrastructure investments for economic development (Berger & Fisher, 2013), more than half of EDOs continue to focus on tax incentives and other cost abatement tools to drive economic development (Zheng & Warner, 2010).

As community colleges historically focus on middle-skills workforce training and employers are often unable to fill all of their available middle-skills jobs, building successful partnerships between community colleges and local EDOs may help create strong incentives for employers to relocate into an area. Understanding the successful community college/EDO partnerships able to attract new employers could assist regions in building their economies. However, this researcher found few studies examining the partnerships between community colleges and local EDOs able to attract new employers to a region and pairing the new employers' jobs with locally trained workers. The focus of this study was to explore and research this partnership phenomenon and report upon the traits and characteristics of community college/EDO partnerships that have successfully attracted new businesses to their service area.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the elements of community college and EDO partnerships that successfully collaborate to attract new employers to an area and to discern the organizational elements at the community college that help these partnerships succeed. The form and function of these successful partnerships could provide models for other

community colleges interested in developing or improving partnerships with their local EDOs. Overall, this study was designed to uncover common themes and patterns across successful community college/EDO partnerships.

### **Research Questions**

Two primary research questions guided this study:

1. What are the characteristics of the partnership between community colleges and EDOs that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to their service area?
2. What programs, policies, or practices at the community college contributed to this partnership that attracted new employers with middle-skills jobs to the area?

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks**

The theoretical framework guiding this study was the critical success factor theory, in which critical success factors (CSFs), defined as “the limited number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department or organization” (Bullen & Rockart, 1981, p. 7), are identified and defined. These CSFs can then be monitored and managed, resulting in more successful achievement of the overall goals. Over the last 40 years, this theory has been applied to business, government, public-private partnerships, and a host of other types of organizations and partnerships to describe a method of achieving success (Alexander, 1997).

The conceptual framework for this study, developed by Kanter (1994), identified specific partnership CSFs leading to collaborative advantages for organizations. Collaborative advantage is the benefit received by the partners above what they would have received working alone (Pinnington et al., 2020). The CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) in building advantageous partnerships are Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information,



Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. This study applied Kanter's eight CSFs for successful collaborative partnerships, called the eight "I"s, and other criteria not identified by Kanter, as the conceptual framework within which to analyze the case study partnerships between community colleges and EDOs.

## **Methodology**

This research was a qualitative study using a multiple-case design exploring the phenomenon of partnerships between community colleges and EDOs that were successful in attracting new employers to their area. The study used semistructured interviews of key individuals from each organization within the partnerships, analyzed through the lens of the CSF framework for successful collaborative partnerships outlined by Kanter (1994). This multiple-case study design contributes to the identification of patterns, themes, and relationships (Yin, 2018) across the partnerships.

Cases were selected based on identified community college/EDO partnerships that successfully attracted new employers to their regions. This purposeful sampling of exemplary partnerships was done as "an effective way to discover how success is achieved" (Roueche & Baker, p. 10).

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data for this study was collected using semistructured interviews with questions designed to elicit information on each of the eight CSF's identified by Kanter (1994) through research on successful, collaborative partnerships in business, and other CSF's not identified by Kanter. Each of the interviews were conducted via online video conferencing software, which allowed for video and audio recordings, with permission of the participant. Most (15 or 17) interviews were one-on-one, which allowed participants to express honest answers to the open-ended questions

and the interviewer to ask follow up questions tailored to the individual interview and information being communicated. The interview protocol can be found in Appendices A and B.

The interviews were coded based on the eight CSFs identified by Kanter (1994) for collaborative partnerships and “other” for items not included by Kanter: Individual Excellence, Importance, Interdependence, Investment, Information, Integration, Institutionalization, and Integrity. More specific coding was added as subcodes under “other” and aligned to the research questions.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study highlights the elements of EDO/community college partnerships and community college structures that have successfully attracted new employers into a community. The research about these successful partnerships could contribute to economic development practices in similar community college service areas by modeling CSFs in successful partnerships that brought new employers to a region. In addition, it could serve as a model for how community colleges and EDOs partner and positively contribute to the goals and mission statement of each organization.

These collaborative CSFs may also inform policy development by local governments to encourage partnerships between EDOs and community colleges to grow middle-skills jobs in local areas, improve economic diversity, and help grow the local tax base by moving citizens from low-wage jobs to middle-wage jobs. Applied within individual institutions, this study could lead to development of programs and practices that foster partnerships across economic development entities.

Finally, this study adds to the body of knowledge related to community colleges and EDO partnerships. This study, which focused on partnerships that successfully attracted new

employers to an area, demonstrates that the partnerships in this study have a breadth and depth of relationship that extends beyond business attraction programs, and beyond business growth programs, to community development and growth for each of the partners involved. This study could provide a basis for regions seeking foundational knowledge as they look to change, diversify, or modernize their economic base of employers and improve their community.

## **Findings**

Analysis of data from the nine partnerships studied across four colleges and nine EDOs revealed a number of key findings. The similarity in the expression of the CSFs across all partnerships indicates that a core set of activities, attitudes, and attributes in the community college/EDO partnerships, and specific areas of practice and program at the community college, can aid both organizations in improving their own position as well as allowing both organizations to improve their community. The findings (below) are supported by information from the most relevant critical success factors for that finding.

### **Finding #1 - Partnerships are Not Focused on a Single Activity**

Community colleges and EDOs approach the partnership as a strategic activity with the potential to fulfill multiple goals. All of the partnerships in this study have been active for at least 5 years, with some having existed since the early 1970's. Every partnership is engaged in business attraction, business growth, and workforce development activities, but they also work together in the community and on one another's initiatives. They serve on the same committees and projects, they call on one another to support local initiatives, and they use each other's strengths to improve the health of the community.

**Importance** – Organizations prioritize the relationship and recognize interlocking strategic objectives between two partners. For participant organizations, the ability to grow the

local economy through attracting new employers, workforce development, increasing the tax base, or other means, was considered a core strategic objective. And, although organizations recognize their different purposes, those in this study understand the value of the other organization and their need to work well together to succeed.

They recognize the ability of their partner to contribute to their own organization's goals. One EDO director expressed this through the understanding that the most important thing for employers is a skilled workforce, and to grow tax revenue, the EDO must help assure the employer that a qualified talent pipeline is available in their area. To do that, the EDO must have a strong community college to partner with.

**Integration** – Partners create tangible linkages throughout their organizations and seek input from their partner. Participants are dedicated to improving their community, not just their organization, so these partnerships have extensive integration across areas not traditionally the responsibility of either the college or the EDO. They may both support downtown revitalization efforts or contribute to poverty reduction programs with time and resources. Some of these interactions involved board and committee membership across various community groups and activities. As critical parts of a community's infrastructure, these partners recognize the importance of having deep relationships across the two organizations.

In some cases, the partners worked together on a variety of local business initiatives that use each organization's strengths to improve the economy. One example included helping small businesses during the global pandemic in 2020. In this initiative, the college president worked with the EDO, the small business development center, and the chambers of commerce to support hard-hit small businesses.

Each participant in the study discussed the wide variety of activities they engaged in with their partner and the importance of developing their relationship through a larger portfolio of projects and actions beyond business attraction programs. The college/EDO partnerships in this study were successful in many areas because they engaged together across many activities.

### **Finding #2 - Communication is King, and Trust is its Crown**

Within the partnerships, study participants recognized the importance of honest, trusting communication across organizations. They had the opportunity to communicate frequently because of the breadth of activities they worked together on, in both formal and informal ways. All participants talked about the need for a reliable exchange of information and the trust they had in their partner to share information about business, jobs, projects, and other activity. In many cases, they interacted with their partners in personal as well as professional ways and built relationships between individuals in each organization. Each partner approached the work together as collaborators, not competitors. In addition to frequent communication, the participants talked about the trust they had in their partner to keep everyone up to date and to share, not hoard, knowledge.

**Information** – The partners engaged in open communications, including sharing information relevant to success of goals and programs. Participants in this study spend considerable time together in activities across their service areas. Everyone sits on the same boards, attends the same meetings, presents at one another's board and advisory council meetings, and participates in the same community development activities. Many of the participants described this frequent, honest communication as a primary instrument of strong collaboration and a mechanism for reinforcing their collaboration.

The participants talked about these open lines of communication affording them the opportunity to share business and community intelligence to improve their ability to serve stakeholders. These partners had formal, regular channels of communication, such as through reports and newsletters, and less-regular interaction, such as during the reporting of annual and semi-annual business- and skills-surveys in the community. In addition, the EDOs sit on the college industry advisory boards with local businesses to keep current on business needs and changes in industries. And, because the partners recognize that businesses share different information with each of the partner organizations, the partners meet regularly to share workforce data and training needs.

**Institutionalization** - The EDOs commented on the broad ties between their organization and the college. They value the direct contact and commitment of senior executives at the college, but they also rely on interaction with other parts of the college. The EDOs in this study employed, on average, 2-3 people, whereas the colleges had significantly more employees in areas related to economic and workforce development activities. All EDOs interacted with a variety of individuals within the colleges, depending on the needs of the businesses and the projects.

**Integrity** - The participants said their frequent, diverse interaction with their partner promotes open, frequent communication in formal and informal ways. This frequent interaction and communication appear to build the trust between the organizations. The EDOs talked about their trust in the college partner to work directly with business clients. As they pointed out, once the decision is made by the business to locate in the area, training and education decisions by the companies have little impact on the EDOs. To keep plans progressing, the college often works

solely with the business, but EDOs felt confident in the college updating them as appropriate because of their overall trust in the college.

Both partners understand the importance of trust to their productive relationship and work to build and maintain that trust through honesty, delivering on commitments, excellence in their own work, and responsiveness to their partner's requests.

### **Finding #3 - The Heart of it All is the Community**

Both colleges and EDOs recognized their primary constituents to be the community. They view their roles in the community to be different, but their ultimate goal is to improve and serve the community. As partners, they work independently and cooperatively for the good of the community and willingly invest resources, whether human or capital, in community development projects and programs.

**Importance** – One of the reasons the partnerships are a high priority for both the colleges and the EDOs is the ability of the organizations to accomplish more for the community together than individually. In one case, the current primary strategic objective cited by the EDO was a social impact bond being developed. The college was an integral part of the bond process because of its ability to develop stackable credentials to help improve economic mobility and decrease intergenerational poverty. In other cases, the EDO highlighted the ability to elevate the overall economy in the area, and thus the whole community, through their partnership with the college. The EDOs and community colleges work together to pursue higher wage opportunities with employers that improve the standard of living for workers in the community while growing the tax base and local services. Together they are able to improve the local economy for businesses and citizens.

**Integrity** – Each of the partners trusts that the organizations are, ultimately, focused on doing the best thing for the community. As one EDO remarked, the work they do with the community college is based on knowing that they are both putting in their best effort for the good of the community.

#### **Finding #4 - Respect the Hurdles Each Partner Overcomes for Joint Success**

Both colleges and EDOs have rules, regulations, and procedures required of them related to workforce and economic development. Colleges must work around the long curriculum process and ensure their programs meet accreditation standards. EDOs must move at the speed demanded by their clients and, generally, have quotas for business growth and attraction. The participants in this study understood the requirements their partner was forced to work with and respected the abilities of their partner to use their best efforts to overcome their hurdles and deliver programs.

As one EDO Director said in relation to a specific business attraction program:

We saw what [the college leader] was willing to do within the institution, we knew that he was willing to move mountains. And I think he saw the same thing on our side...we were going to trust each other, and we were going to find ways to make this work.

**Individual Excellence** – EDOs respected the educational expertise of their college partner and recognized the colleges' unique ability to bring expertise, speed, and flexibility to development of employer-specific education and training programs. And, because they recognized the unique skills of their college partner, they also appreciated the challenges the colleges had in developing these programs “at the speed of business” rather than at the pace of the traditional curriculum process.



The colleges also recognized and respected the speed at which the EDOs are required to react to potential businesses. As one college president said, the EDOs are under tremendous pressure to deliver for the businesses, the local government, and the community. They generally have quotas to meet and must react to the needs of business to help meet those quotas.

Both partners recognize the unique difficulties encountered by the other organization to successfully meet goals, and because of the trust and respect they have for their partners, each responds with understanding and assistance where possible.

### **Finding #5 - Speed, Agility, and the Decision-Maker Must be Present**

One of the often-cited advantages of working with the colleges in this study was their speed, agility and adaptability in developing employer-specific training programs. Both partners understand the work it takes for the colleges to be agile and flexible. The unique latitude given to the department at the college focused on workforce development and EDO interface was recognized as integral for the success of the partnership. These colleges are charged with developing the programs, finding resources, hiring the faculty, and gaining approval of both the employer and the college leadership quickly and effectively.

In addition to their speed and agility, each of the colleges in this study appointed a senior level executive or department leader as the single point of contact for the EDO and employers. These senior executives had direct contact with the president of the college or, in one case, was the president of the college. The compliments and accolades showered on their contact by the EDO was impressive. In some cases, it might be possible to confuse the college partnership with a personal partnership. These leaders were universally applauded for their collaboration, their cooperation, and their innovation.

For three of the colleges in this study, having a department empowered to respond to workforce needs and nurture the EDO partnerships with a leader who “has a seat at the table” of college leadership was considered distinctive and a significant value for the local economy. Some EDOs leaders who had worked in other geographies remarked on the value of working with a dedicated department lead by a college decision-maker versus their experience in other places. This ability to have the focus of college leadership made the EDOs’ work easier and more successful for the community.

Although this prioritization of resources is not unique to the colleges in this study, it also is not common across the majority of community college in the United States. There are some states using this model that have shown tremendous success in business attraction and economic development. College leaders in this study acknowledge the value of this organizational design and credited to helping the economic and workforce development programs succeed.

Those in the role of primary lead at the college for the EDO partnerships discussed the access and advantages their position brings to making decisions or getting feedback to commit to employers. Without this commitment of resources by the college, they do not believe their partnerships would be as successful.

### **Finding #6 - Partners Invest in Each Other, Repeatedly and Over the Long-Term**

Organizations in this study invested a variety of resources in their partner over the life of their partnership. The resources included personnel, dollars, and influence, resulting in improvements in the organizations and their communities. Each partner recognized that, based on their integration and interdependence, a strong partner would result in improved ability for their own organization to meet goals.

**Importance** – The partners recognize that each organization needs to be strong in order for the partnership to succeed. Many of the EDOs help raise financing or support college proposals for new buildings or critical college programs. As one college vice president explained, their EDO partners helped raise capital to renovate college buildings that were then instrumental in attracting new employers using the modern training facility. Another EDO discussed their organization's long-term investment in bringing local business engagement to fund new healthcare training facilities at the college, resulting in the ability of the college to train nurses to fill a workforce shortage in the area.

**Investment** - Besides human capital investment, partners talked about the financial investments made by colleges to support the EDOs. Some EDOs in the study are investor funded, so the college pays to become a member of the EDO. This investment helps strengthen the EDO and it increases the institutionalization of the partnership by putting college leaders on the board of the EDO.

**Individual Excellence** - As one of the key resources for local growth, the EDOs in this study talked about the need for a strong community college in maintaining a strong economy. One EDO director discussed the importance of a strong community college in producing their next generation of citizens and community leaders. Both partners view each other as both short- and long-term resources for developing a healthy, prosperous community.

**Interdependence** - They work as a team and willingly contribute to the final outcome on projects, knowing that neither organization alone would get the results demonstrated by the team, or partnership. Both organizations expressed their understanding of the need for each partner to succeed and the importance of sharing credit for that success. Participants were clear that their partnership is a mutually beneficial relationship and dependent on the strength of one another.

**Multiple Areas of Interaction between Partners** – As stated in Finding #1, these successful partnerships were built on working together across many activities. Fifteen of 17 interviews discussed the variety of interactions between the organizations beyond business attraction and the importance of contributing to their partner's success. They understand that the partnerships are not going to be successful if only one partner gains in the work they do together. Both partners must benefit from their work and both partners must invest in the other, but both partners do not need to gain from every interaction. Multiple areas of interaction allow for one partner to benefit in some situations and the other to benefit in other situations. Over the course of the relationship, both partners must believe they are benefiting.

### **Finding #7 – Community Colleges Fulfill Employers #1 Need**

Economic development experts in this study consistently discussed the number one need of employers today is a skilled workforce and reliable talent pipeline. Both EDOs and college leaders talked about the ability of their community college partners to supply those workforce and talent pipeline needs better than 4-year colleges and universities. Over the past 10-15 years, employer needs have evolved, particularly when making decisions on relocation and expansion. One EDO director described this new reality as difficult for some traditional EDO executives to understand. For EDOs that comprehend this change, the ability to partner with a community college that is nimble and responsive is critical to their success. In many cases, EDOs understand the advantage of partnering with their local community college versus a 4-year institution, based on the ability of the community college to be more agile in developing employer-specific curriculum and training.

In most cases, the EDOs in this study had access to local universities but purposefully chose to focus on partnering with their local community college for its ability to respond quickly

and its understanding of the business environment. Community colleges in this study were able to focus on skills needed by employers, thus improving the EDOs ability to attract and support businesses.

For all of the partnerships in this study, the community college was a critical part of economic development proposals in their local area. The work done by the community college workforce development group was seen as a tool for current and future economic growth. In one instance, the community college was so ingrained in the work of the EDO that the EDO participant forgot the presence of a 4-year institution in their city.

### **Findings Related to Literature**

The relationship of this study's findings to existing research is additive in some areas and supportive in others. In activities such as community colleges working with local employers to develop training programs and collect information on employer needs (Roueche & Jones, 2005), this study supports existing literature and advances an understanding of the importance of those activities by demonstrating its significance in building communication and trust in collaborative partnerships with local EDOs. This research also adds to the knowledge of community college/EDO partnerships by investigating the critical success factors in these collaborative partnerships rather than focusing on the success or failure of the individual programs executed by one or both of the organizations (Gossett, 2002; Lowe, 2007; Parilla & Lui, 2019, October 15; Thiel & Grover, 2013, April 25).

In relation to other research utilizing Kanter's (1994) Eight I's of collaborative partnerships with community colleges (Alexander, 1997), this research adds to the understanding of partnership elements by focusing on community college and local EDO partnerships and excludes triad relationships which incorporates businesses. This is significant based on the

finding in this study of the primary, underlying goal of both community colleges and EDOs to improve their community, which is not generally a primary goal of business. This common focus on the community molds community college/EDO partnerships and changes the relationship when business is included in the research.

Much of the existing research on changes in economic development proposals for attracting new employers and growing existing businesses is mirrored by the attitude and actions of the EDOs in this study. All EDOs in this study recognize the importance of workforce development and a consistent talent pipeline to employers. Although many of these partnerships had been in place for many years, the EDO directors closely monitored the research on employer needs relative to relocation, which is reported annually Gambale (2020). The EDOs developed collaborative partnerships with their local community colleges to ensure they would be able to assist businesses acquire and maintain a skilled workforce. This research supports the work of Zhang et al. (2017), Warner and Zheng (2013), and Bartik (2020).

### **Implications**

The study and its findings indicate actions for community colleges, EDOs, and local governments that may wish to strengthen the local work done on behalf of the community to build or diversify the economy in their area. The partnerships described by participants are effective in attracting new employers, growing local businesses, and improving the communities served by the community colleges and local EDOs. Although this study is qualitative, and therefore not necessarily extensible to other partnerships, the similarities between the partnerships suggest actions discussed below.

## **Community Colleges**

All community colleges in this study were recognized for their ability to take action quickly, to be innovative in their approach to workforce development, and to be agile in dealing with employer-specific needs. These traits started with direction from the highest level of leadership to react “at the speed of business.” All colleges in this study have a high-level workforce development and training leader with direct access to the college president and the authority to make decisions for the college related to workforce development programs on a timely basis. Whereever possible, these colleges seek to include faculty in working with employers to ensure relevant skills are included in training programs and classroom equipment mirrors equipment used by employers. They have been able to innovate in their development of curriculum, use a variety of resources to fulfill the needs of business, and reach into the college beyond their own department to execute the training.

Colleges looking to replicate the work of these partnerships should consider forming a workforce and training department led by a Vice President who sits on the President’s cabinet. This vice president and their department should be collaborative and innovative in their program development and understand the needs of business.

In addition, the workforce development department and the college should expect this department to engage with the community beyond workforce development and be prepared to partner with their local economic development group. This partnership should work to develop ongoing communication channels and trust among the participants and focus on the ultimate common goal of improving the community.

## **Economic Development Organizations**

The local EDO wishing to replicate the successful partnerships in this study should engage with their local community college and focus on innovative ways to develop skills building programs with the community college to support the needs of the local business community and the targeted industries. As was noted by all the EDOs in this study and is discussed in the literature on 21st century economic development and corporate relocation practices, the number one need of businesses today is a qualified workforce and skilled talent pipeline. Community colleges are best positioned to fulfill that business need and innovative local EDOs should partner with their local community college to include workforce training as part of their economic packages to businesses. In addition, those EDOs interested in inclusive economic development, in which all parts of the local community benefit from an improved economy, should partner with the community college to increase the earning potential of all citizens in their community.

In addition, the EDO should expect to engage with the community beyond economic development and be prepared to partner with their community college. This partnership should work to develop understanding and trust among the participants and focus on the ultimate common goal of improving the community.

## **Local Governments**

For local governments interested in improving their economic outlook, diversifying their economy, or bringing inclusive economic development to their area to ensure all citizens prosper, they should engage their local EDOs and community college to develop a partnership that includes open, frequent sharing of information and data, respect for the work of each organization, the ability to act quickly to meet employer needs, and uses unique strengths of both



the EDO and community college in developing plans and programs. Productive partnerships between EDOs, community colleges, and local governments can build local businesses by ensuring they have skilled workers that allows company growth, increase earning potential of all citizens by ensuring they have consistent access to skills-building training, make the area more economically competitive in the global market by educating their citizens in evolving skills and supplying businesses with a reliable talent pipeline, and increase the overall tax base of the area through well-paying, abundant jobs and a vibrant business community.

### **Unexpected Results**

The researcher was surprised by the similarity of results across all partnerships. The colleges in this study were located in different regions of the United States and did not work together in economic and workforce development activities. Despite their diverse locations, each school and their EDO partners expressed parallel aspects of the critical success factors driving their partnerships to meet strategic goals and strengthen their working relationships. One of the most striking similarities was related to the words used to describe the community colleges in this study. Despite having no questions or references made by the researcher during the interviews, 13 of the 17 interviews spontaneously used the exact words “nimble”, “agile” or “flexible” to describe the college in their work with the EDOs. Beyond those specific words, 16 of the 17 interviews discussed the ability of the colleges to react to the needs of industry or the EDOs quickly and to be agile in their work. These similarities indicate the importance of the college’s ability to act “at the speed of business” in their work with EDOs and businesses when developing workforce development programs.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

- This research is focused on the partnerships between community colleges and their local/regional EDO that successfully attracted new employers to the areas. A similar case study of community college/EDO partners focusing on those that were unable to attract new employers to their areas may be a valuable opportunity to compare and contrast the presence of Kanter (1994) CSFs in each of the partnerships. This complementary study may help discern the importance of these CSFs in successfully meeting business attraction goals.
- Using this study as a starting point, developing a quantitative study on a larger population of community college/EDO partnerships may help further distinguish the CSFs in these collaborative partnerships to help improve, grow, or diversify a community through the work of their community college and EDO.
- This study focused on the local partnerships between community colleges and EDOs, but in many areas, state-level influence may have a significant impact on local activities. It may be valuable to study of how state-level policymakers (legislature, community college system, economic development system) incentivize critical success factors in the collaborative advantage partnership model on a regional level.

## **Summary**

The impetus of this study was the dramatic changes in the workplace and jobs that is leading our society to a widening of the wealth gap. Community colleges have, historically, educated middle-class, middle-skills workers. With the rise of automation and off-shoring, the middle-class is shrinking and middle-skills jobs are rapidly changing. Businesses are experiencing a shortage of qualified middle-skills workers, causing some to delay growth and

others to consider relocation to areas with a reliable talent pipeline. Economic development groups, tasked with helping their areas grow their economy, have historically used cost avoidance programs to assist business growth or attract new employers. But, more forward-looking EDOs understand that employers are in desperate need of qualified skilled workers with the ability to continually upskill or reskill as jobs change. These innovative EDOs on the state level have developed skills-building programs, most often administered through the state community colleges. Often associated with manufacturing, these community college employer-specific programs have helped some states successfully grow their economy. Much of the research on community college/EDO partnerships focused on state-level work and often included employers in the partnership discussion. However, little research focused on the elements of community college/EDO partnerships at the local or regional level, specifically examining those that have attracted new employers to the area.

This study examined local organization partnerships able to bring in new employers and found the characteristics of these partnership strikingly similar across the nine partnerships. The research showed these productive community college/EDO partnerships are staffed with collaborative, innovative, service-oriented professionals who focus on improving their community through their individual work and the collective work of the partnership. The community colleges are able to move “at the speed of business” while delivering quality education and training for employers. The EDOs incorporate the community college programs into their business growth and attraction packages while working to help strengthen their community college partners. Trust and respect are the backbone of these relationships, with each organization valuing the knowledge and skills of their partner. For areas without strong state-level business attraction and growth funding, local community college/EDO partnerships may be

the most viable solution for inclusive economic growth and diversification. This study indicates the primary critical success factors necessary to build these effective partnerships.

## References

- Adler, E. S., & Clark, R. (2008). *How it's done: An invitation to social research*. Thomson/Wadsworth.
- Alexander, A. E. (1997). *Perceived critical success factors in triad partnerships between a community college and business and industry* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Alpern, M. T. I. (2020). *Critical success factors for e-government web services* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Autor, D. (2010). The polarization of job opportunities in the u.S. Labor market: Implications for employment and earnings. *Discussion Paper Series (Hamilton Project)*.
- Autor, D. H. (2015). Why are there still so many jobs? The history and future of workplace automation. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(3), 3-30.  
<https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.29.3.3>
- Autor, D. H., Levy, F., & Murnane, R. J. (2003). The skill content of recent technological change: An empirical exploration. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(4), 1279-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1162/003355303322552801>
- Baime, D. (2019, November). Community college affordability: Policy priorities in a political season. *American Association of Community Colleges*. <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DB-affordability-brief-final-November-2019.pdf>
- Bartik, T. J. (2019). *Making sense of incentives: Taming business incentives to promote prosperity*. W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
- Bartik, T. J. (2020). Smart place-based policies can improve local labor markets. *Journal of policy analysis and management*, 39(3), 844-851. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22224>

- Berger, N., & Fisher, P. (2013). *A well-educated workforce is key to state prosperity*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/states-education-productivity-growth-foundations/>
- Berger, R. (2013). Now i see it, now i don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research : QR*, 15(2), 219-234.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Bergson, A. (2016). *Upskilling the new american workforce*. N. S. Coalition.
- Brint, S. G. (1989). *The diverted dream : Community colleges and the promise of educational opportunity in america, 1900-1985*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Bullen, C. V., & Rockart, J. F. (1981). *A primer on critical success factors* (Working papers 1220-81). Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan School of Management.  
<https://er.lib.k-state.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.er.lib.k-state.edu/working-papers/primer-on-critical-success-factors/docview/1698779276/se-2?accountid=11789>
- Capozzoli, N. R. (2020). *A case study of a traditional university serving nontraditional students under the framework of adult learning theories* [Doctoral Dissertation, Ball State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Carnevale, A. P., & Desrochers, D. M. (2003). How education's societal mission and business's human resource needs are converging. *Catalyst (National Council for Continuing Education & Training)*, 32(1), 3-6.
- Carnevale, A. P., Garcia, T. I., Ridley, N., & Quinn, M. C. (2020). *The overlooked value of certificates and associate's degrees: What students need to know before they go to college*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

- Carnevale, A. P., Ridley, N., & Cheah, B. (2019). *Upskilling and downsizing in american manufacturing*. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.
- Cohen, A. M., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C. B. (2013). *The american community college* (6th ed.). Jossey-Bass. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ksu/detail.action?docID=1366278>
- Cohen, N. (2000). *Business location decision-making and the cities: Bringing companies back*. The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy.  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/business-location-decision-making-and-the-cities-bringing-companies-back/>
- Conway, M. (2011). *Where labor supply meets labor demand*. Aspen institute.  
<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/05/Where-Labor-Supply-Meets-Labor-Demand.pdf>
- Council of Economic Advisors. (2019). *2018 - a banner year for the us economy*. Retrieved December, 2020 from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2018-banner-year-u-s-economy/>
- Crawford, M. (2013). Work force development programs can make or break the deal. *Area Development Site and Facility Planning*, 48(3), 84-87.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4 ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2)
- Dangor, G. (2021, July 11). G20 signs off on 15% global minimum corporate tax—here's how it will work. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/graisondangor/2021/07/11/g20-signs-off-on-15-global-minimum-corporate-tax-heres-how-it-will-work/?sh=3a591ce01c7e>

- Daniel, D. R. (1961). Management information crisis. *Harvard Business Review*, 39(5), 111-121.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=6780970&site=ehost-live>
- Day, R. (2020). Is degree deflation it's solution for hiring challenges and reducing costs? *Global Knowledge*. <https://www.globalknowledge.com/us-en/resources/resource-library/articles/is-degree-deflation-a-solution-for-hiring-challenges-and-reducing-costs/>
- DePrima, A. J. (2018). *The brightfields phenomenon: A study of critical success factors, barriers and implications for sustainability* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Delaware]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Disterheft, A., Caeiro, S., Azeiteiro, U. M., & Filho, W. L. (2015). Sustainable universities – a study of critical success factors for participatory approaches. *Journal of cleaner production*, 106, 11-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.01.030>
- Dobbs, R., Manyika, J., & Woetzel, J. (2015, May 12). How u.S. Companies can fill the skills gap. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2015/05/12/how-u-s-companies-can-fill-the-skills-gap/>
- Donahue, R., McDearman, B., & Barker, R. (2017). Committing to inclusive growth: Lessons for metro areas from the inclusive economic development lab. *Brookings Institution Reports*.
- Dougherty, K. J., & Bakia, M. F. (1999). *The new economic development role of the community college*. Community College Research Center.  
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/economic-dvpt-role-community-colleges-brief.pdf>
- Dyer, J. (2017a). *Economic diversification: How community colleges support community initiatives*. International Economic Development Council. <https://www.accs.edu/wp->



[content/uploads/2020/06/Economic\\_Diversification-How-Community-Colleges-Support-Community-Initiatives.pdf](https://www.accs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic_Diversification-How-Community-Colleges-Support-Community-Initiatives.pdf)

Dyer, J. (2017b). *Economic diversification: How community colleges partner with economic development organizations*. International Economic Development Council.

[https://www.accs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic\\_Diversification-How-Community-College-Partner-with-EDOs.pdf](https://www.accs.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Economic_Diversification-How-Community-College-Partner-with-EDOs.pdf)

Dyer, J. (2017c). *Economic diversification: How community colleges prepare the workforce*. International Economic Development Council.

[https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/Economic\\_Diversification\\_Paper\\_1.pdf](https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/Economic_Diversification_Paper_1.pdf)

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management journal*, 50(1), 25-32.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2007.24160888>

Fawcett, S. E., Fawcett, A. M., Watson, B. J., & Magnan, G. M. (2012). Peeking inside the black box: Toward an understanding of supply chain collaboration dynamics. *The journal of supply chain management*, 48(1), 44-72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-493X.2011.03241.x>

Fawcett, S. E., Magnan, G. M., & McCarter, M. W. (2008). Benefits, barriers, and bridges to effective supply chain management. *Supply chain management*, 13(1), 35-48.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/13598540810850300>

Fitzgerald, J. (1998). Is networking always the answer? Networking among community colleges to increase their capacity in business outreach. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 12(1), 30-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124249801200103>

Florida, R. L. (2002). *The rise of the creative class : And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. Basic Books.

Florida, R. L. (2012). The rise of the creative class revisited. *Bloomberg*,.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-06-25/the-rise-of-the-creative-class-revisited>

Foote, C. L., & Ryan, R. W. (2015). Labor-market polarization over the business cycle. *NBER macroeconomics annual*, 29(1), 371-413. <https://doi.org/10.1086/680656>

Fuller, J. (2017, December 18). Why employers must stop requiring college degrees for middle-skill jobs [Op-Ed]. *harvard business school Working Knowledge*.

<https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/why-employers-must-stop-requiring-college-degrees-for-middle-skill-jobs>

Gambale, G. (2020). *34th annual corporate survey & 16th annual consultants survey*. Area Development. <https://www.areadevelopment.com/Corporate-Consultants-Survey-Results/Q1-2020/34th-annual-corporate-survey-16th-annual-consultants-survey.shtml>

Goldstein, H. A., Lowe, N., & Donegan, M. (2012). Transitioning to the new economy: Individual, regional and intermediation influences on workforce retraining outcomes. *Regional studies*, 46(1), 105-118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2010.486786>

Gossett, J. D. (2002). *Economic development and community colleges: Attributes, attitudes and satisfaction levels of western north carolina stakeholders* (Publication Number 3071481) [Doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University]. ProQuest One Academic.

Gould, E. (2018). *The state of american wages 2017*. Economic Policy Institute.

<https://www.epi.org/publication/the-state-of-american-wages-2017-wages-have-finally->

[recovered-from-the-blow-of-the-great-recession-but-are-still-growing-too-slowly-and-unequally/](#)

Grubb, W. N., Badway, N., Bell, D., Bragg, D., & Russman, M. (1997). *Workforce, economic, and community development. The changing landscape of the entrepreneurial community college*. Community College Research Center.

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/workforce-economic-and-community-development.html>

Hagel, J., Brown, J. S., & Wooll, M. (2019). *Skills change, but capabilities endure*. Deloitte Insights. [https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/6332\\_From-skills-to-capabilities/6332\\_Skills-change-capabilities-endure.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/6332_From-skills-to-capabilities/6332_Skills-change-capabilities-endure.pdf)

Haralson, L. E. (2010, April 1). *What is workforce development?* Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. <https://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/bridges/spring-2010/what-is-workforce-development>

The headquarters checklist: How do companies pick a location? (2017). *Knowledge @ Wharton*. <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/headquarters-checklist-companies-pick-location/>

Holzer, H. (2015, April). *Job polarization and worker skills: A tale of two middles*. Brookings. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/polarization\\_jobs\\_policy\\_holzer.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/polarization_jobs_policy_holzer.pdf)

Holzer, H. J. (2016). *The role of skills and jobs in transforming communities* (1936007X). Penn IUR/Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26328305?seq=1>

Holzer, H. J., & Baum, S. (2017). *Making college work: Pathways to success for disadvantaged students*. Brookings Institution Press. <https://doi.org/10.7864/j.ctt1hfr1gx>

Inkpen, A. C., & Tsang, E. W. K. (2005). Social capital, networks, and knowledge transfer. *The Academy of Management review*, 30(1), 146-165.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2005.15281445>

International Economic Development Council. (n.d.). Economic development [Brochure].

[https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/IEDC\\_What\\_is\\_Economic\\_Development.pdf](https://www.iedconline.org/clientuploads/Downloads/IEDC_What_is_Economic_Development.pdf)

Jaimovich, N., & Siu, H. E. (2014). Demographics, job polarization, and macroeconomic analysis of labor markets. *NBER reporter*, 2014(4), 9-12.

Jolley, G. J., Lancaster, M. F., & Gao, J. (2015). Tax incentives and business climate: Executive perceptions from incented and nonincented firms. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 29(2), 180-186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242415571127>

Kanter, R. M. (1994). Collaborative advantage: The art of alliances. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(4), 96-108. <https://hbr.org/1994/07/collaborative-advantage-the-art-of-alliances>

Kayanan, L. F. (2012). *Critical success factors to achieve the status of best places to work in the federal government: A case study* [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Kress, A. M., & de los Santos, G. E. (Eds.). (2014). *The role of community colleges in regional economic prosperity*. League for Innovation in the Community College.,  
<https://www.league.org/league-books/role-community-colleges-regional-economic-prosperity>.

Lehman, D. W. (2016). *Identifying the critical success factors for information systems to manage sponsored research activities at institutions of higher education* [Doctoral Dissertation, Robert Morris University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Leopold, T. A., Ratcheva, V., & Zahidi, S. (2018). *The future of jobs report 2018*. W. E. Forum.  
<https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018>
- Lochmiller, C. R., & Lester, J. N. (2016). *An introduction to educational research: Connecting methods to practice* (Vol. 3). Ringgold, Inc.
- Lowe, N. J. (2007). Job creation and the knowledge economy: Lessons from north carolina's life science manufacturing initiative. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 21(4), 339-353.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242407306359>
- Madigan, K. (2015, May 12). Small-business owners were more upbeat and ready to hire in april. *Wall Street Journal*. <https://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2015/05/12/small-business-owners-were-more-upbeat-and-ready-to-hire-in-april/>
- Maurer, R. (2019). Employers open to ditching degree requirements when hiring. *Society for Human Resource Management*. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/eliminating-degree-requirements-hiring-ibm-penguin.aspx>
- Min, S., Mentzer, J. T., & Ladd, R. T. (2007). A market orientation in supply chain management. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 35(4), 507-522.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0020-x>
- Nash-Hoff, M. (2017). High-performing port and workforce training drive global manufacturing in south carolina. *Industry Week*.
- O'Banion, T. (2019). *13 ideas that are transforming the community college world*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Osei-Kyei, R., & Chan, A. P. C. (2018). Stakeholders' perspectives on the success criteria for public-private partnership projects. *International Journal of Strategic Property Management*, 22(2), 131-142. <https://doi.org/10.3846/ijspm.2018.444>

- Parilla, J., & Lui, S. (2019, October 15). *Talent-driven economic development*. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/talent-driven-economic-development-a-new-vision-and-strategic-agenda-for-regional-and-state-economies/>
- Pinnington, B., Lyons, A., & Meehan, J. (2020). Value-independent third-party orchestrators as catalysts of business collaboration. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 1-16.
- Rockart, J. F. (1979, March-April). Chief executives define their own data needs. *Harvard Business Review*, 57(2), 81. <https://hbr.org/1979/03/chief-executives-define-their-own-data-needs>
- Rodríguez-Segura, E., Ortiz-Marcos, I., Romero, J. J., & Tafur-Segura, J. (2016). Critical success factors in large projects in the aerospace and defense sectors. *Journal of business research*, 69(11), 5419-5425. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.148>
- Ross, M., & Bateman, N. (2020, January 8). Low unemployment isn't worth much if the jobs barely pay. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/01/08/low-unemployment-isnt-worth-much-if-the-jobs-barely-pay/>
- Roueche, J. E., & Baker, G. A. (1986). *Profiling excellence in america's schools*. American Association of School Administrators,.
- Roueche, J. E., & Jones, B. R. (2005). *The entrepreneurial community college*. American Association of Community Colleges,.
- Roueche, J. E., & Roueche, S. D. (2012). *Rising to the challenge: Lessons learned from guilford technical community college*. Community College Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publishing.

- Schmitt, A., Gutierrez, A., & Hooker, S. (2020). *Inclusive economic development: Good for growth and good for communities*. <https://www.jff.org/resources/inclusive-economic-development-good-growth-and-good-communities/>
- Schofield, T. (2013). Critical success factors for knowledge transfer collaborations between university and industry. *The journal of research administration*, 44(2), 38-56.
- Schramm, W. (1971). *Notes on case studies of instructional media projects*. Stanford University Institute for Communication Research. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED092145.pdf>
- Schwab, K. (2016). The fourth industrial revolution: What it means and how to respond. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-fourth-industrial-revolution-what-it-means-and-how-to-respond/>
- Shaffer, D. F. (2015). Higher education systems are assuming a larger role in the economic development efforts of their states. *Economics, management and financial markets*, 10(1), 54-79. <https://www.addletonacademicpublishers.com/contents-emfm/284-volume-10-1-2015/2409-higher-education-systems-are-assuming-a-larger-role-in-the-economic-development-efforts-of-their-states>
- South Carolina Department of Commerce. (n.d.). Just right for business. *SCcommerce.com*. [https://www.sccommerce.com/sites/default/files/2020-11/Automotive\\_NoCrops.pdf](https://www.sccommerce.com/sites/default/files/2020-11/Automotive_NoCrops.pdf)
- Thiel, C., & Grover, E. (2013, April 25). *Economic benefit of the michigan new jobs training program*. Anderson Economic Group. [https://www.andersoneconomicgroup.com/Portals/0/upload/MNJTP%20final%20report\\_4\\_25\\_13.pdf](https://www.andersoneconomicgroup.com/Portals/0/upload/MNJTP%20final%20report_4_25_13.pdf)
- Tovar, J. (2020). *(mis)aligned: A national study of the relationship between community college career and technical education and labor market projections* (Publication Number

- 27958077) [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Trkman, P. (2010). The critical success factors of business process management. *International journal of information management*, 30(2), 125-134.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2009.07.003>
- Tutak, J., & Ludgate, A. (2019). *Success by design: Five high-impact, low-cost ideas for college leaders*. Deloitte Insights. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/reimagining-higher-education/student-success-in-college.html>
- Velluzzi, N. D. (2010). Community colleges, clusters, and competition: A case from washington wine country. *Regional studies*, 44(2), 201-214.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00343400903167888>
- Warner, M. E., & Zheng, L. (2013). Business incentive adoption in the recession. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 27(2), 90-101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242413479140>
- Warriner, R. F. (2005). *Applying critical success factor theory to catholic school management* (Publication Number 3166786) [Doctoral dissertation, Capella University]. ProQuest One Academic.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications : Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications,.
- Zhang, X., Warner, M. E., & Homsy, G. C. (2017). Environment, equity, and economic development goals: Understanding differences in local economic development strategies.



*Economic Development Quarterly*, 31(3), 196-209.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242417712003>

Zheng, L., & Warner, M. (2010). Business incentive use among u.S. Local governments: A story of accountability and policy learning. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 24(4), 325-336.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242410376237>

## **Appendix A - Community College Interview Protocol**

Thank you for taking the time today to speak with me about your work with local EDOs. As you know from our initial correspondence, I am conducting research on partnerships between community colleges and economic development organizations that have successfully attracted new employers to a service area.

Before we start, I want to make sure you know that this interview is entirely voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time and you can withdraw from the study at any point with no questions asked. You can also request to review any information from this interview that might be used in the study.

I would like to video and audio record this interview. All recordings will be kept confidential and in a secure location, accessible only to me. Are you ok with recording this interview?

I would like to ask you a few questions regarding the partnership you have with local EDOs. All your answers will be confidential and included anonymously in this study. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. Tell me about your role in Kirkwood.
2. Which local or regional EDO have you worked with to bring new employers to your area?
3. How do you interact with those organization and who do you work with primarily at that organization?
4. Tell me about one of the employers you attracted to your area with the organization
  - a. What was to process that brought that employer to your area?
5. Why do you think your partnership with the organization was able to attract new employers to your area?

- a. What do you think the organization was uniquely able to contribute to the partnership?
  - b. What do you think Kirkwood was uniquely able to contribute to the partnership?  
*(Individual Excellence)*
  - c. (How) did those skills work together in this partnership? *(Interdependence)*
6. Was this partnership important to the ability of your organization to fulfill one of its major strategic objectives?
  - a. Which one?
  - b. How? *(Importance)*
7. What sort of financial or other resources did each partner invest in their work together?  
*(Investment)*
8. How did/do your organizations communicate?
  - a. What sort of information do you exchange with one another? *(Information)*
  - b. Can I have copies of any of the correspondence to contribute to this research?
9. Who from each organization is involved in this partnership?
10. What have you learned from the organization? *(Integration)*
11. Describe the decision-making process within this partnership?
  - a. Would you describe this partnership as informal or formal? *(Institutionalization)*
12. If there is trust within your partnership, how was that trust developed? *(Integrity)*
13. What programs, policies, and practices at the college helped attract new employers to the area and build a successful partnership with the organization?
14. Are there other things that we have not discussed that you believe contributed to the success of this partnership?

## **Appendix B - Economic Development Organization Interview**

### **Protocol**

Thank you for taking the time today to speak with me about your work with xx community college. As you know from our initial correspondence, I am conducting research on partnerships between community colleges and economic development organizations that have successfully attracted new employers to a service area.

Before we start, I want to make sure you know that this interview is entirely voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time and you can withdraw from the study at any point with no questions asked. You can also request to review any information from this interview that might be used in the study.

I would like to video and audio record this interview. All recordings will be kept confidential and in a secure location, accessible only to me. Are you ok with recording this interview?

I would like to ask you a few questions regarding the partnership you have with xx. All your answers will be confidential and included anonymously in this study. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

1. Tell me about your role in the xx organization.
2. How do you interact with the community college and who do you work with primarily at that organization?
3. Tell me about one of the employers you attracted to your area with the community college
4. Why do you think your partnership with the community college was able to attract new employers to your area?
  - a. What do you think the college was uniquely able to contribute to the partnership?

- b. What do you think the xx organization was uniquely able to contribute to the partnership? (*Individual Excellence*)
  - c. (How) did those skills work together in this partnership? (*Interdependence*)
- 5. Was this partnership important to the ability of your organization to fulfill one of its major strategic objectives?
  - a. Which one?
  - b. How? (*Importance*)
- 6. What sort of financial or other resources did each partner invest in their work together? (*Investment*)
- 7. How did/do your organizations communicate?
  - a. What sort of information do you exchange with one another? (*Information*)
  - b. Can I have copies of any of the correspondence to contribute to this research?
- 8. Who from each organization is involved in this partnership?
- 9. What have you learned from the community college? (*Integration*)
- 10. Describe the decision-making process within this partnership?
  - a. Would you describe this partnership as informal or formal? (*Institutionalization*)
- 11. If there is trust within your partnership, how was that trust developed? (*Integrity*)
- 12. What programs, policies, and practices at the college helped attract new employers to the area and build a successful partnership with xx organization?
- 13. Are there other things that we have not discussed that you believe contributed to the success of this partnership?