Challenge Grant Funding Request: Region 9 Software Talent Attraction and Retention ("STAR") Program

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To: Regional Prosperity Initiative Challenge Grant Committee
Date: August 31, 2015

Purpose:

The purpose of the Region 9 Software Talent Attraction and Retention (STAR) Program is to increase the depth and pipeline of critical software development and engineering talent in the region.

One of the most significant challenges identified in the RPI Five-year Prosperity Strategy by employers is the lack of software development talent. The current software talent shortage impacts all of the industry focus areas identified as priority cluster areas – Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing and Healthcare. Per the report, "Software application developers have seen the most employment demand over the last several years. Overall, information technology job growth has been increasing at a rapid rate over the last five years, and is expected to continue growing (WIN 2014)."

The purpose of this program is to catalyze and support the implementation of the software developer talent attraction needs of the region. This program will achieve this objective through a regionally focused consortium of employers that will participate in a multi-pronged talent attraction and retention campaign. The outcomes expected will be to bring in at least 90 computer science college students, recent graduates and experienced hires into Region 9 per year. The major components of this innovative leadership development program are a robust internship program, mentorships, speaker series, well-developed on-campus recruitment efforts, and regular recruiting events to attract and retain key software talent. The total budget for this program is $110,000 with employer contributions, and a grant request of $7,500.

The Prosperity plan goals and objectives that this project addresses

This proposal fits squarely under the broad strategy "Growing and Attracting Talent to meet Industry Needs".

This program will directly support the following strategies that have been identified in the RPI process:

- Develop regional industry cluster partnerships, potentially through the newly forming Talent Development Career Councils to provide input to the career pathways model.
- Inform job seekers outside of the region about Region 9 job opportunities, competitive wages and regional quality-of-life amenities.
- Engage future and current job seekers with local companies to show breadth of opportunity in the region.

This program will positively impact the following regional prosperity metrics:

- Population growth
- Size of workforce
- Median income
- % of population with a bachelor's degree
- Number of establishments in the IT cluster
- Median home value

This program is aligned with previously identified strategies of the Industry Talent Council:
- Developing a talent pipeline
- Directly working with colleges and industry
- Increasing internships
- Increasing employer connections
- Targeting the program towards women and minorities

This grant is being written in support of the IT Industry Council, one of the four groups identified as grant beneficiaries.

Scope of Work

The purpose of this program is to attract key software development and engineering to the Ann Arbor region. This will be accomplished by an innovative rotational internship and mentoring program, and through quarterly invitation only events. Employers may elect to participate at a variety of levels. Employers sign up in the fall for the following calendar year. This will allow the program to participate in fall recruiting events on campus, when recruiting activity is highest and will avoid "losing out" to other regions and employers that have very aggressive on-campus recruiting efforts.

Program Elements:

1. **Quarterly talent attraction events** – Participating region 9 employers will be invited to attend a recruiting mixer with available software talent. These will be invitation-only events, with a special emphasis on out of area talent. Real estate tours and trailing partner/spouse counseling will also be provided.

2. **College graduate recruitment** – Selected college students that are graduating in December or spring with an interest in Ann Arbor will be identified and resumes will be shared with participating regional employers. Employers will be encouraged to bring them in for interviews during specific "STAR Recruitment" days, where additional programming including tours and presentations by technology leaders will help sell the region. These students will also be provided with a mentor and "Welcome program" of monthly events for one year upon joining their employer.

3. **Junior internships** – Selected college juniors will be included in a pool of interns to be placed at participating employers. During the summer, they will have a chance to meet with other employers, and to participate in technology and social events that will further sell Region 9.

4. **Sophomore rotational development program** – Select college sophomores will be provided with mini-internships at multiple participating employers. There will be given a mentor, and will participate in programs to get to know the other employers and software developers in the

region. At the end of the summer they will leave with an offer for an internship during the following summer.

There will be a tiered financial participation levels for employers, with the lowest participation level at $1,000. Based on need, and initial interest, the target number of employers is 25-30.

Target Outcomes:
Sophomore participants: 10
Junior participants: 30
Recent graduate hires: 30
Experienced hires from out of the region: 30

Timeline
September-October 2015
- Sign up employers
- Identify colleges to include in outreach efforts
- Build marketing and branding

October 2015-January 2016
- Participate in on-campus recruiting events
- Promote the program to students
- Connect students with the participating employers

January – May 2016
- Additional recruitment activities
- Internship matches confirmed
- Mentor recruitment
- Programming for summer interns and recent graduates confirmed
- First and second quarterly out of area talent attraction events

June-August 2016
- Interns and recent graduates are welcomed to the region
- Mixer events, speaker series occur
- Mentors are assigned and monitored
- Sophomore interns match for the following year
- Third quarterly event for out of area talent

September-October 2016
- Fourth quarterly event for out of area talent
- Program evaluated and modified for the following year

Budget

- Program management	$45,000
- Events	$20,000
- Travel costs	$20,000
- Marketing collateral, advertising	$15,000
- Intern Programming and activities	$10,000
Total	$110,000
Employer & Funder contribution	-$102,500
Amount requested	**$7,500**