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CONTACT: Akia (Garnett) Ashmond Brew
agbrew@iedconline.org

Workforce Manual Emphasizes Working-Learning Ecosystems as Key to Closing Skills Gaps

Washington, DC (Nov. 10, 2016) -- Economic developers should focus their efforts on creating working-learning ecosystems to attract, retain and expand businesses. A new training guide from the International Economic Development Council highlights this as one of several ways to close the skills-gap in America.

“Technological innovations are rapidly changing the way we as economic developers practice workforce development. This new research provides a guide to upskilling workers in a variety of communities to fit business and industry needs as they shift focus.” – Barry Matherly, CEcD, FM, IEDC 2016 Board Chair, President & CEO of the Greater Richmond Partnership.

The guide is from a series of trainings offered at IEDC’s 2016 conferences called, “Chutes and Ladders; The New Rules of the Game for Upskilling Workers,” which were focused on how improving the system of upskilling and experiential learning in communities builds a resilient workforce. The guide was released at IEDC’s Annual Conference in Cleveland, OH, in September, and addresses the new challenges arising for economic developers, especially in workforce development.

The report discusses how traditional educational structures have not kept up with the effects of changes due to technology and rapidly globalizing markets have had on workforce development. In order to stay competitive, workers are seeking learning and upskilling opportunities to either pivot out of careers that no longer serve them or move to higher positions. Meanwhile students are increasingly exposed to the working world through internships, apprenticeships, co-ops or career fairs.

The report also explains that the idea of “working-learning” describes activities that many economic development organizations (EDOs) are supporting, and that a unified working-learning system is a key component to attracting, retaining and expanding businesses in a community. The guide recommends creating an ecosystem that integrates programs across all levels and institutions, with a focus on how EDOs can support working-learning systems that allow workers to gain skills to use new technology, rather than be replaced by it. Best practice examples are included in the report as case studies from across the country.

The training guide is available for download at <http://www.iedconline.org/web-pages/resources-publications/iedc-publications-for-download/>.

About the International Economic Development Council

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is a non-profit membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 5,000 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind. Economic developers promote economic well-being and quality of life for their communities, by creating, retaining and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth and provide a stable tax base. From public to private, rural to urban, and local to international, IEDC’s



members are engaged in the full range of economic development experience. Given the breadth of economic development work, our members are employed in a wide variety of settings including local, state, provincial and federal governments, public-private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities and a variety of other institutions. IEDC's members create high-quality jobs, develop vibrant communities and improve the quality of life in their regions. www.iedcONLINE.org.