

DEVELOPING AN

Innovation Economy

A

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

for Spokane & The Inland Northwest

Sponsored By



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Triangle of Innovation

Extract of Section IV from the Innovation Economy Study

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was sponsored by INTEC, SIRTl and the Spokane Area EDC

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Regional Collaboration

PRIMARY ACTION #1

Regional Collaboration

NEW REGIONAL IMAGE—INNOVATION

Create a bold and inspirational image for the Inland Northwest region that highlights our strengths, fosters our collaboration and increases our esteem

DIVING IN HEADFIRST

Instead of tepidly skirting the periphery of regional collaboration, we think that the optimal approach is to start with a daring vision that excites people and inspires action. The TRIANGLE OF INNOVATION is a just such a rousing concept—it stimulates the creative juices, unlocks the imagination and sparks the synapses. If the benefits of regional collaboration truly merit the time, energy and effort required for us to work together effectively—then let us ensure that we are working together on something big enough and bold enough for us all to really sink our teeth into.

AN OBLIQUE CONCEPT

The Triangle of Innovation is a strong possibility for a regional image that highlights and emphasizes our existing assets. We developed this concept in the early phases of this Innovation Economy study on the basis of the tremendous, but oft overlooked, research strengths of the Inland Northwest.

THE HEART OF INNOVATION IS RESEARCH

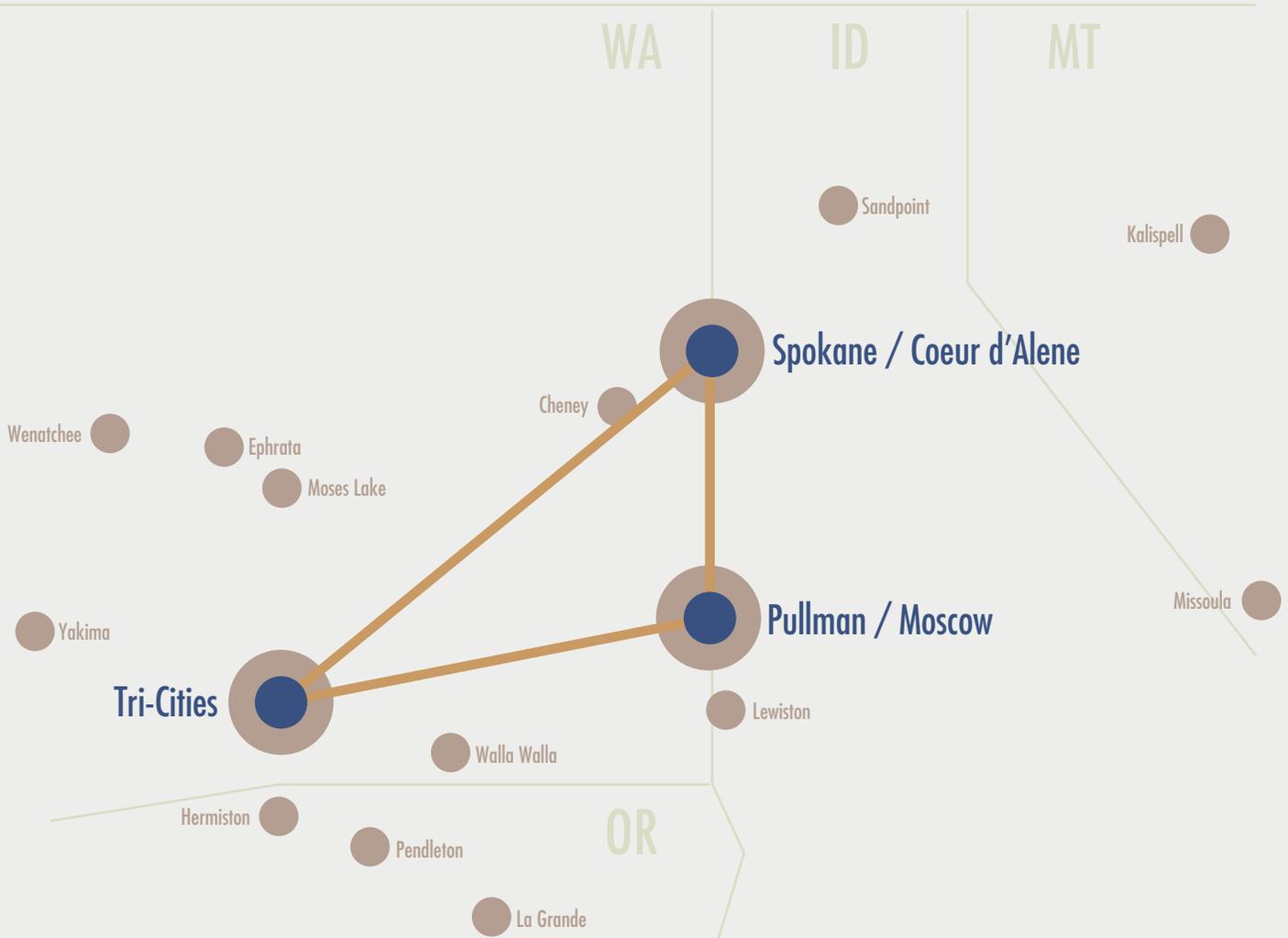
While we have pockets of research capacity throughout the region, this research capacity is largely anchored in three geographies—the Tri-Cities, Pullman / Moscow, and Spokane / Coeur d’Alene.

- The Tri-Cities has one of the greatest concentrations of scientists and engineers per capita in the nation and is home to the prestigious Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), an exceptional institution engaged in cutting edge research in many areas. There is also considerable private research performed in the Tri-Cities.
- Pullman is home to the administrative offices and main campus of Washington State University (WSU), an ‘Extensive’ (highest level) research university, per the Carnegie Foundation.⁽¹⁸⁾ The city also has Schweitzer Engineering

“Economic success (of regions) will increasingly be determined by how effectively they can spur home-grown technological innovation and entrepreneurship.”

*Robert D. Atkinson,
Progressive Policy
Institute*

Inland Northwest Triangle of Innovation



Laboratories, a high-growth private company focused on energy technologies.

- Moscow is home to the administrative offices and main campus of the University of Idaho, also a top research university receiving the highest 'Extensive' classification.⁽¹⁸⁾ Moscow is just across the state line from Pullman.
- The Spokane area has a wide variety of research capacity existing at non-profit organizations (the Heart Institute, Deaconess Medical Center, Sacred Heart Medical Center), universities (Gonzaga University, Eastern Washington University in Cheney and Spokane, WSU Spokane), and the private sector (Agilent Technologies, Hollister-Stier Laboratories and Honeywell).
- The Coeur d'Alene area has research capacity located at the University of Idaho Research Park and private companies such as Advanced Input Devices.

Innovative technologies and products developed in research projects in these three geographies have resulted in the successful launch of various new ventures.

SUBOPTIMAL ALTERNATIVES

A core assumption behind regional collaboration and the Triangle of Innovation concept is that we are all better off in recognizing that we are fellow stakeholders in the regional economy.

Whereas superior results will likely be achieved by working together as members of the same team to substantially grow the size of the regional pie, suboptimal results will likely ensue in working apart as competitors fighting over the slim pickings and meager handouts of the existing pie.

Leaders and decision-makers in the Tri-Cities, Moscow, Coeur d'Alene, Pullman and Spokane areas can all legitimately claim to be able to make significant headway on their own without the involvement of other folks from the region. This is a given—each geography already possesses a unique blend of assets, talent and momentum. The more relevant issue is whether they could make even greater progress locally in creating quality jobs and increasing wages through genuine collaboration regionally.

In the frenzied activity of today's global markets, our competition is not one another. That is the old way of thinking. In the new economy, our competitors are metropolitan areas like San Diego, Austin and Kansas City. Our rivals and opponents include regions, states and overseas cities such as Seville, Auckland and the state of Michigan. If we are unable to achieve effective collaboration on a regional basis, we will suboptimize our results.

“Innovation needs the concentrated energy of a unified effort behind it. It also requires people who ... understand each other.”

*Peter Drucker,
Innovation and
Entrepreneurship*

IV

“It has long been recognized that economic development is a regional phenomenon, with the implication that regional policies are required to improve the performance of the economy.”

*Rick Reeder,
USDA Economic
Research Service*

ON THE MAP

A major question of the Triangle of Innovation is how far it would extend geographically. At this conceptual stage, the safe answer is—as far as it makes sense. The triangle is meant to highlight the extraordinary intellectual capital and knowledge base that already exists in the region. From a geographic perspective, the coverage area could easily include Sandpoint to the north, Missoula to the east, Pendleton to the south, and Yakima and Wenatchee to the west.

The geographic anchors of the triangle are meant *only* to emphasize the largest concentrations of research capacity of the Inland Northwest, but not to detract from the innovation that takes place in other areas. Whether in Walla Walla or Moses Lake or Sandpoint or Missoula, there are many other great examples of innovation across the Inland Northwest. The Triangle of Innovation is meant to serve as an inspiring beginning for a fully inclusive effort at regional collaboration.

MAGNITUDE OF REGIONAL COLLABORATION

A major strength of the Triangle of Innovation concept is that the area encompassed within the Inland Northwest includes anywhere from two to four states. It therefore presumes higher levels of cooperation between state governments and state leadership than exist today—an entirely feasible possibility.

Precedents for significant interstate cooperation already exist in other parts of the country. The more ambitious examples include the Delta Regional Authority (eight states in the Mississippi Delta region), the Northern Great Plains Rural Development Commission (five states and two Canadian provinces) and the Southwest Border Initiative (four states in the southwest bordering Mexico).

Just as important as improved interstate cooperation is the need for enhanced collaboration among all relevant groups, the magnitude of which is sobering. There are well in excess of a hundred different organizations, governments or agencies functioning within the general area of the Triangle of Innovation. This list includes county governments, municipal governments, economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, port districts, public agencies, non-profit organizations, business incubators and more. Throw in the institutions of higher learning, industry associations and the business community and we have a firm foundation for uncommon collaboration—a deep pool of talented individuals and energetic organizations.