

# Bridging the skills gap

Workforce development in rural communities in the Great Plains

Funded by the Rural Futures Institute, University of Nebraska

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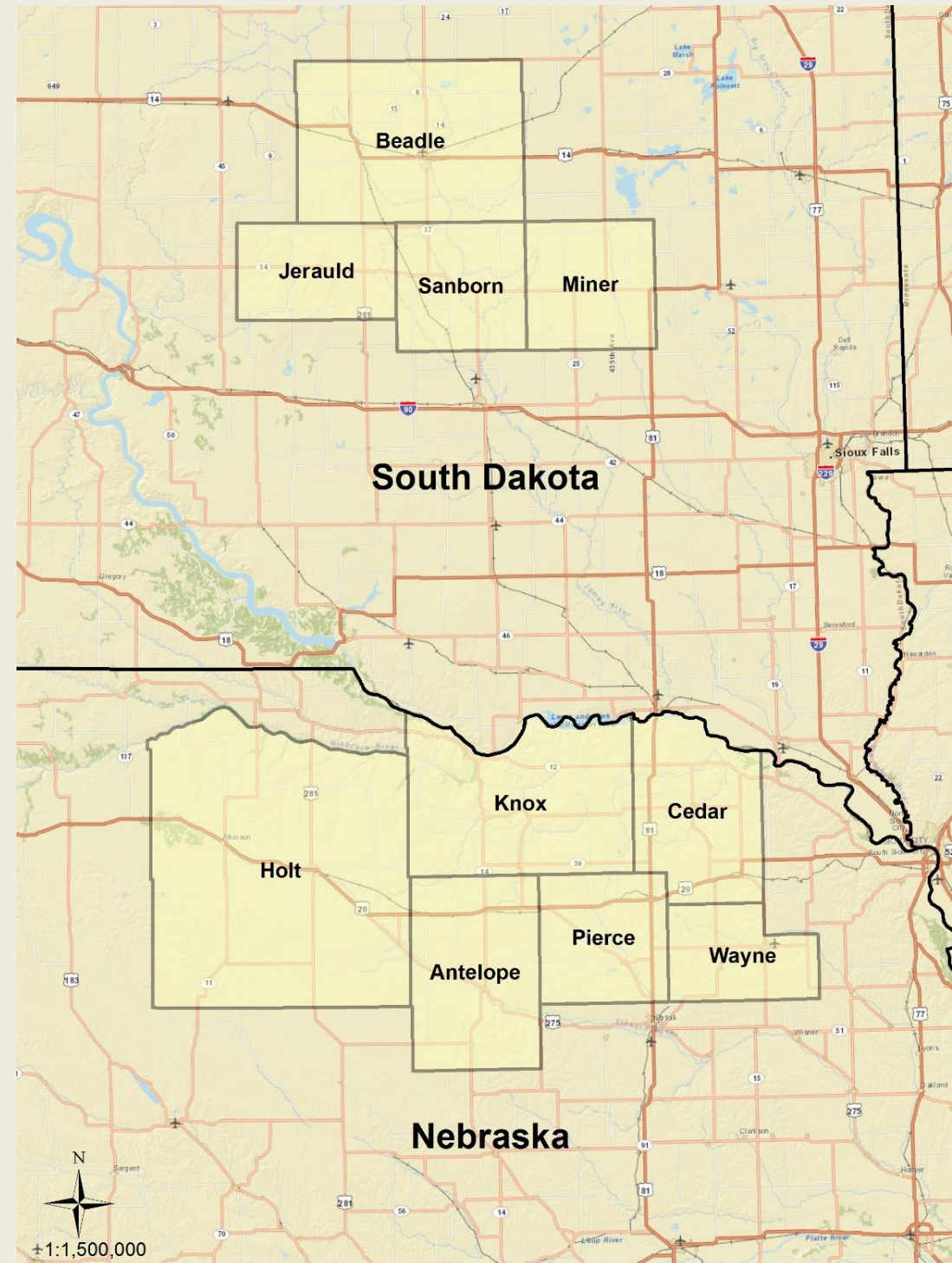
NACDEP

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# Bridging the skills gap: workforce development in rural communities in the Great Plains



Pilot sites

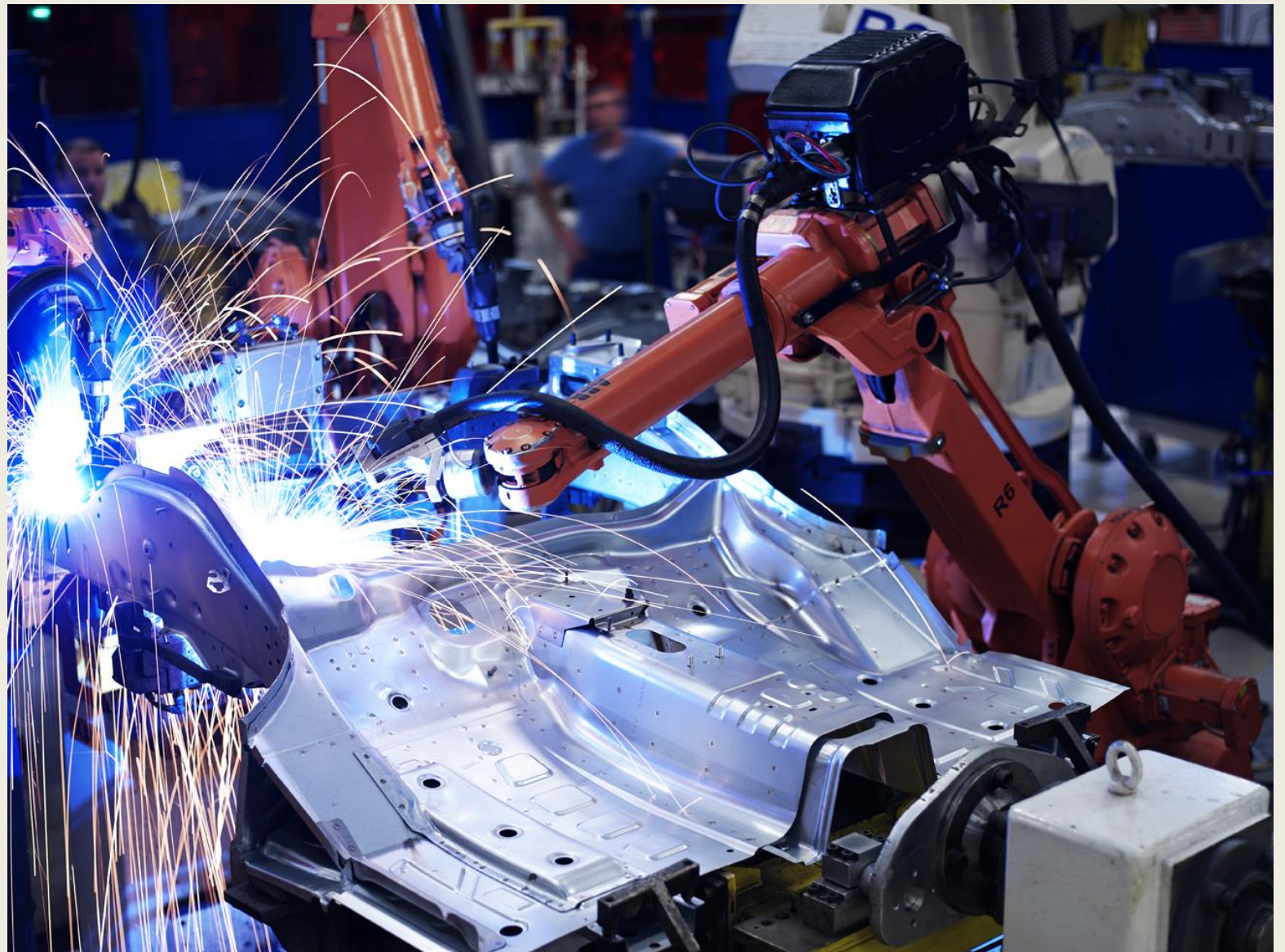


# Presentation Outline

- Background and context:
  - Why are skills so important?
  - Considerations for rural economies
- Project overview
- Early findings
- Best practices:
  - Attracting talent in NE
  - Tapping foreign labor pools in SD
- Takeaways and next steps

# Background and context

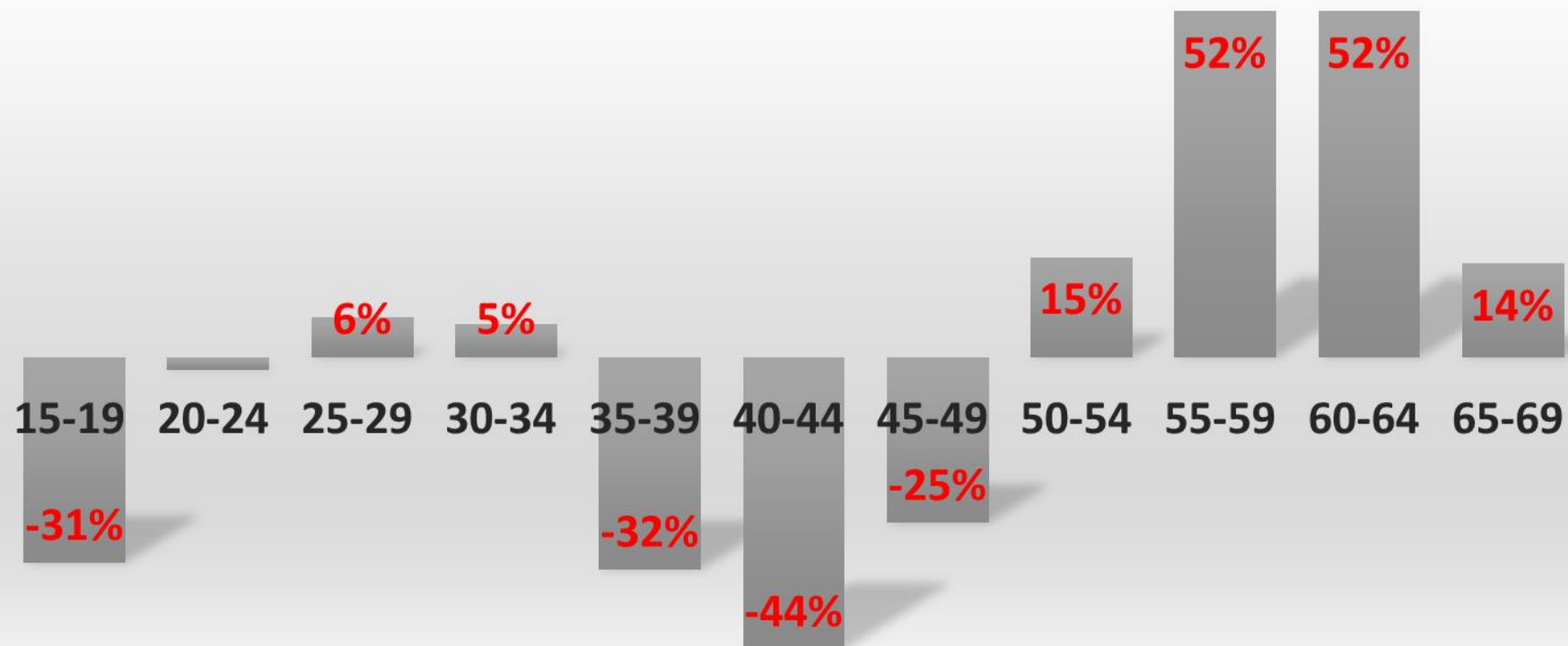
- Why are skills so important?  
Shifts in the nature of  
competition and work



# Background and context

- Particular considerations for rural economies

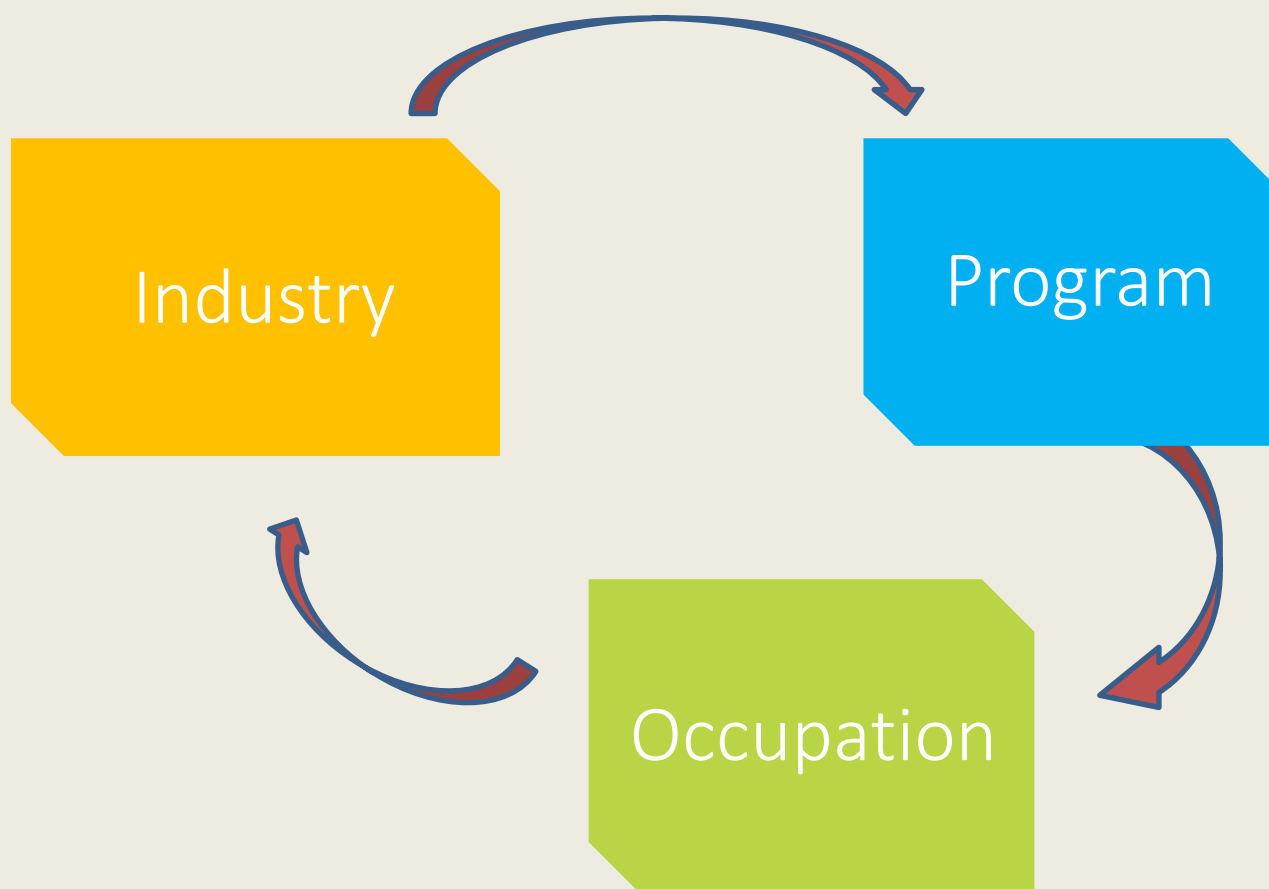
Population change in NE pilot region 2001 - 2014



# Project overview

1: Economic Assessment of Local Industry

2: Stakeholder Engagement



# Early findings: workforce limitations



Young People

## Education







# Best Practices - rural skills gaps

*Drive for Five: attracting, retaining and building local talent in Nebraska*

- Recruit 500 employees - 5 yrs
- Driven by Chamber & Economic Development
- Started 2006-7;  
Got to 440+ people  
(then recession)
- Initial funding - by business
  - 4 yr pledges
  - 1 coordinator & partners
  - recruiting trips, job fairs, media, etc.
- Now funded - $\frac{1}{2}$  by business;  $\frac{1}{2}$  education -  
end will be 2016



# Best Practices - rural skills gaps

*Drive for Five:* attracting, retaining and building local talent in Nebraska

*Their Secret? You need to do everything!*

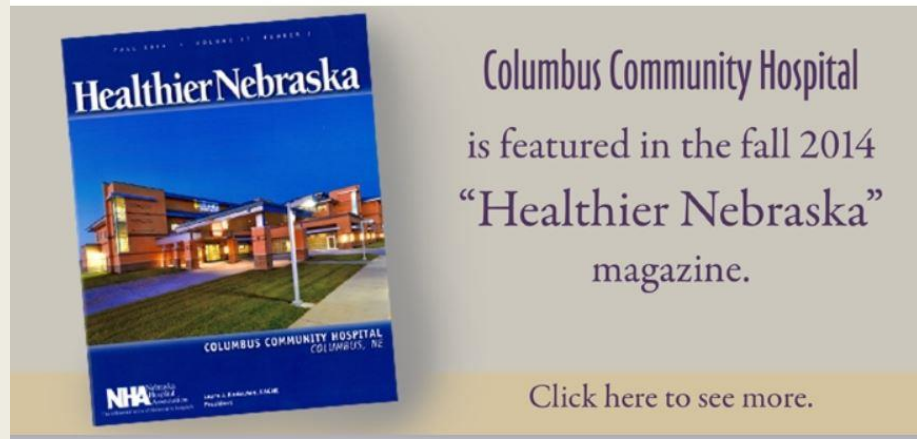
Recruitment = housing, quality of life, quality of schools

*Their Secret? Focused on success!*

Chamber Talent coordinator & Quality of Life Committee



Housing - 43 new lots + 20 additional



# Best Practices - rural skills gaps

Tapping foreign labor pools: Burmese immigrants in Huron, South Dakota

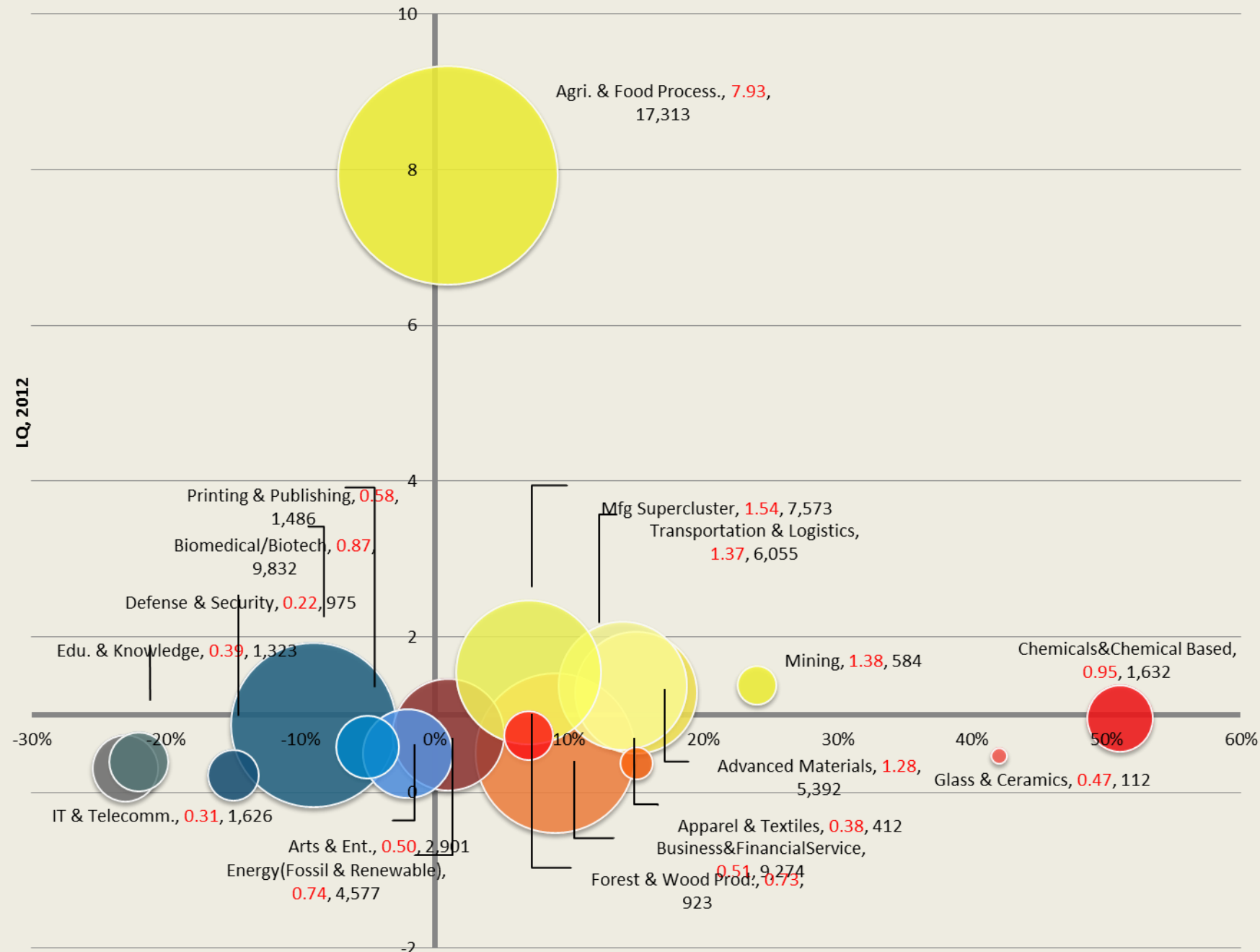


# Best Practices - rural skills gaps

## Tapping foreign labor pools: Burmese immigrants in Huron, South Dakota

- 2,500 Karen live in Huron
- They have bought 175 homes
- Work in 30 area businesses. 1 of 9 jobs in Beadle County
- Dakota Provisions is paying for 6 to become electricians
- 2016 loss of refugee status
- Huron holding soccer tournament for 50 teams
- Recruit skilled Karen from other parts of United States
- Karen college students coming back to community

# Key takeaways and next steps



- Importance of:
  - understanding key drivers of local economy
  - Working together to address workforce needs collaboratively
- Workforce planning product for Extension – seeking your input

# Questions and comments?

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## Thanks

