

Alex Area Stewards have defined thirteen key destiny drivers that will work to strengthen economic vitality for the region. Over thirteen weeks you will read about each destiny driver and its importance to the region. If you find a destiny driver that ignites your passion for the future, call the Alex Area Stewards at (320)763-4545 or visit the website at [www.alexareastewards.com](http://www.alexareastewards.com) and become part of shaping the destiny of our region.

### **Title: Coordinated System for a Highly Skilled Workforce**

**Destiny Driver:** Regional manufacturers, ATC, regional K-12, and other higher education (and economic development) partners will implement a coordinated system to develop, attract, and sustain a highly skilled workforce by 2010.

The world we live in changes quickly. To remain competitive in the current global marketplace, business and industry needs access to a well educated workforce that is able to keep up with the rapid rate of change that occurs in our developing knowledge economy. Everyday there are new technologies, new innovations, and new competitors emerging from around the world that can have a significant impact on the survival of an entire company. As a result of these new global pressures, business and industry personnel are beginning to expect more responsiveness and accountability from education than ever before to provide access to learning in new ways for their future and incumbent workforce. That is why the Alex Area Stewards team has set the following critical Destiny Driver to have a direct impact on our area prosperity and economy: *Regional manufacturers, Alex Tech, Regional K-12, and other higher education and economic development partners will implement a coordinated system to develop, attract, and sustain a highly skilled workforce by 2010.*

The transition to a knowledge-based economy will require a high performance workforce that is adaptable to changing technology and product demand. Researchers have concluded that in the next ten to fifteen years, the workforce in the United States will be shaped by demographic trends, technological advances, and economic globalization. To keep up with these trends and meet the future learning needs in the United States, educators will be required to provide continuous learning, training, and retraining well past initial entry into the labor market. This “new” pattern of learning will challenge our current education systems.

To compound the already daunting challenge of keeping up with business and industry needs, the number of qualified and educated people available for employers to hire will be greatly diminished based on projected demographics. Studies show that the baby boom generation has reached the peak of their economic contribution and as they retire employers will have a difficult time finding replacement workers from a considerably smaller pool of qualified individuals. By 2020 there will be about 46 million baby boomers with at least some college experience who will be over 55 years of age. The graying of the baby boomers will slow labor force growth and unless we increase the quantity and quality of education and training, we are unlikely to generate enough skill to replace the retiring baby boomers. At the current rate of increasing need and a decreasing skilled population, there is a projected net deficit in workers with at least some college of about 12 million workers by 2020.

The need to build our future workforce is very real and will only become a larger issue in the near future. Our businesses cannot operate without skilled workers, and without them they will be forced to either drastically change operations or move to a location where skilled workers can be found. By addressing the workforce change that will soon be upon us, this region will be positioning itself for business retention and attraction (and overall economic success) for years to come.

Only by working as a group will business, education, and organizations be able to ensure the future success of people and businesses. We have reached a changing point for employment demographics and the time to prepare for this change is now. If you have interest or insight in building our future successful workforce, we encourage you to get involved in this initiative by calling the Alex Area Stewards at (320) 763-4545 or going online to [www.alexareastewards.com](http://www.alexareastewards.com).