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“Clusters of Innovation Initiative: Regional Foundations of U.S. Competitiveness.”

Published October 2001

A cluster, as defined by Professor Michael E. Porter of Harvard University, is a geographic concentration of competing and cooperating companies, suppliers, service providers and associated institutions. Clusters of Innovation, an initiative of the Council from 1998 to 2001, developed a definitive framework to evaluate cluster development and innovative performance at the regional level. It also shared analytic tools, benchmarking results and lessons learned with key decision makers in every part of the country.

Under the leadership of Porter and F. Duane Ackerman, Chairman and CEO of BellSouth Corp., and guided by a steering committee of national leaders, the initiative focused on how clusters form, why they are critical to a region's economic future, and how regional stakeholders can help its clusters thrive. Five regions – Atlanta-Columbus, GA; Pittsburgh, PA; Research Triangle Area, NC; San Diego, CA; and Wichita, KS – were examined using Porter's cluster mapping data, selected input and output measures, and extensive survey and interview instruments in the following areas:

- Economic performance
- Composition and evolution of the regional economy
- Business and innovation environment
- Competitiveness of selected regional clusters
- Implications for the regional agenda

This national report draws heavily upon five regional studies and synthesizes the implications for any region that seeks to improve its economic performance. The report examines the composition and performance of regional economies, how industry clusters develop and innovation arises, how clusters affect a region's economic future, and how a region can establish a strategy and action program to drive its economy and clusters forward. The framework employed and the lessons learned apply to every region of the country.

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