



# opportunity next strategic plan summary

Prepared by Avalanche Consulting and McCallum Sweeney Consulting

Building a globally competitive economy for the Charleston region  
**opportunity next**

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

In July 2010, the Charleston Regional Development Alliance engaged Avalanche Consulting and McCallum Sweeney Consulting to facilitate the creation of Opportunity Next, the three-county Charleston region's most comprehensive economic development initiative to date. The nine-month planning process included an in-depth competitive assessment of the region's strengths and challenges, identification of target audiences for the region's future economic and workforce development initiatives, detailed action plans for growing target companies in the region, and an organizational program of work that aligns the efforts of key regional stakeholders.

The objective of Opportunity Next is to launch a collaborative effort to supercharge the region's economy, strengthen employment and to become an international hub for business and talent.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Opportunity Next involved input from more than 1,400 residents of the three-county region, which includes: Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties. More than 200 individuals participated in focus groups and interviews, 133 area companies in a workforce survey, and 1,172 residents in a public survey. A 48-member Advisory Board of regional stakeholders guided the process from beginning to end. The resulting strategy is one that represents the vision of the entire region.

## PROJECT SPONSORS

First Federal, MeadWestvaco, SCANA Corporation and South Carolina Power Team

## TARGET AUDIENCES


Opportunity Next calls on the region to take action to foster the growth of four target clusters – **Advanced Security and IT, Aerospace, Biomedical, and Wind Energy** – and to further enhance five core competencies that are critical to overall economic growth – **Advanced Materials, Creative Design, Drivetrain and Power Systems, Logistics and Software**.

Competencies include workforce skills, infrastructure, and innovations that intersect multiple sectors, enabling the region to progress despite industry fluctuations. Targeting core clusters while further enhancing competencies will create a foundation for sustained long-term prosperity.

While the target clusters and competencies will be focal points for leveraging economic and workforce development efforts, other industries will prosper as well. As the region improves its climate for these high-value, catalyst target clusters, businesses in all sectors will benefit.

VERTICAL INDUSTRY TARGETS

COMPETENCY TARGETS	advanced security & it	aerospace	biomedical	wind energy
advanced materials		✓	✓	✓
drivetrain & power systems		✓		✓
software	✓	✓	✓	✓
creative design	✓	✓	✓	✓
logistics	✓	✓	✓	✓

continued 

## PRIORITIES

In addition to offering target-specific strategies, Opportunity Next recommends a handful of priority actions that must take place to improve economic conditions across the region:

**Leadership** – To compete globally, all stakeholders and organizations must act as a unified region with shared goals. Work together to communicate the region’s targets and strategies with state officials. Involve the private sector in economic and workforce development to an unprecedented degree.

**Workforce Development and Education** – Engage workforce developers in an examination of the region’s talent pipeline. Bridge gaps between target needs and current programming. Expand higher education offerings and continue to strengthen the quality of PreK-12 schools.

**Infrastructure** – The region’s infrastructure is critical to the health of the entire state’s economy. The region

must settle and move forward with rail decisions as soon as possible. Complete port expansion projects. Find funding to improve I-26 in anticipation of future growth. Successfully complete Our Region Our Plan, the BCD-COG’s regional land use plan.

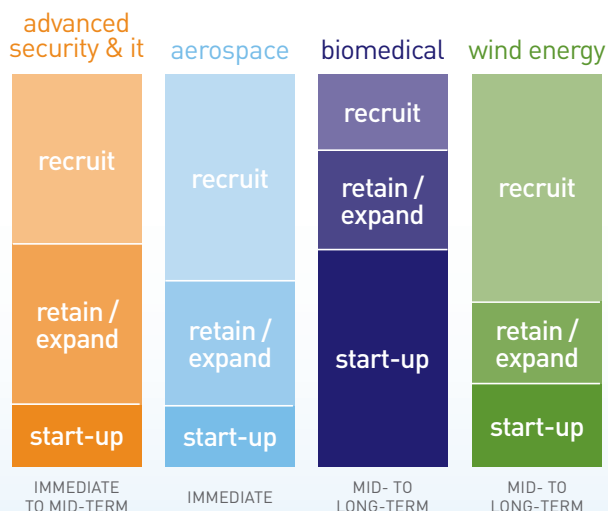
**Entrepreneurship and Innovation** – Develop a neighborhood of training, higher education, R&D and private industry on the Clemson University Restoration Institute campus. Merge aerospace and wind energy expertise on the site. Create a Competitiveness Center that serves as the central station for regional research and intelligence.

**Marketing** – Regional marketing will focus on international audiences in the years to come. Be prepared by starting with a public education campaign to build community pride, awareness of the region’s many assets and the public’s role in economic development. Develop a talent recruitment campaign that complements target cluster marketing. Increase coordination of tourism and economic development marketing activities.

## TARGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic development efforts should balance business recruitment with business retention/expansion and entrepreneurship programs. Opportunity Next suggests a unique balance of these activities for each target. Some targets, such as aerospace, represent an immediate recruitment and expansion opportunity. Others, such as biomedical, depend on entrepreneurial resources.

Opportunity Next provides a detailed plan of action for each target cluster and competency. To view the strategy documents, visit [www.opportunity-next.com](http://www.opportunity-next.com).



## IMPLEMENTATION

Opportunity Next is a strategic roadmap for the entire region and achieving its full potential will require a synergistic approach from a wide variety of organizations. In the upcoming months, an Alignment Board will form that will include representatives from each organization that has a role in implementation. In addition, private sector led task forces will be organized for each target cluster and competency.

Every resident has an opportunity to participate in the region’s progress. Suggestions include: volunteer at local schools, get your company involved in and advocate for public education. Encourage elected officials to adopt innovative policies and invest in infrastructure that anticipates future growth to preserve the region’s high quality of life. Support the expansion and health of our port. As you can see, there are countless opportunities. Find an element of the new strategy that you’re passionate about and get involved in a big way.

**Want to stay in the loop and make your voice heard?**  
**Share your thoughts at [www.opportunity-next.com](http://www.opportunity-next.com).**