The cluster analysis reveals the importance of two “star” manufacturing clusters: transportation equipment and machinery manufacturing. These areas are more concentrated in the region and, therefore, represent a comparative advantage for the community. These clusters continue to grow.

Several emerging growth areas also are worth noting. The biomedical/biotechnical cluster, which has more than 2,000 jobs, employs more workers than manufacturing. Energy is another important emerging area. Similar to the other clusters in the bottom right quadrant, energy is underrepresented in the region but is in a growth mode, which may eventually put it in the stars quadrant. Other dynamic emerging clusters are business and financial services, employing over 2,000 workers, and arts, recreation, entertainment and visual industries, a smaller cluster in terms of employment, though equally dynamic.

Agribusiness, food processing and technology, along with transportation and logistics, are important employers and traditional economic drivers for this region, especially ag-related industries. However, these “mature” clusters are experiencing negative growth, which may bring about a decline in concentration over time.

- **Stars**
  - Manufacturing super-cluster
    - Transportation Equipment
    - Machinery Manufacturing

- **Mature**
  - Agrib., Food Proc., And Tech
  - Transportation & Logistics
  - Mining

- **Transforming**
  - Forest and Wood Products
  - Defense and Security
  - IT and Telecommunications
  - Advanced Materials
  - Printing and Publishing
  - Education and Knowledge Creation
  - Apparel and Textiles
  - Manufacturing Supercluster:
    - Fabricated Metal Product Mfg
    - Computer and Electronic Mfg
    - Primary Metal Mfg

- **Emerging**
  - Biomedical/Biotechnical
  - Business and Financial Services
  - Energy
  - Arts, Ent., Rec., And Vis. Industries
  - Chemicals
  - Glass & Ceramics
  - Manufacturing Supercluster
    - Electrical Equip., Appliance & Component Mfg

Source: EMSI 2015.4 Class of Worker—QCEW Employees, Non-QCEW Employees, Self-Employed, and Extended Proprietors
The population in the region is getting older, on average, with older cohorts (50+) increasing between 2001 and 2013 and nearing retirement. At the same time, the percentage of individuals of prime working age (20-49) continues to decline. This region also has a low unemployment rate. These conditions make it very difficult for firms to expand when they try to find skilled and talented workers locally.

To address the issue of the lack of available workers, it will be important for local leaders to explore a mix of strategies that might help attract and retain talented workers from outside the area. These strategies may include increasing wages, expanding the stock of quality housing, improving access to broadband and other IT services, providing quality health care services and investing in key amenities.

Educational attainment has improved since 2001, with a decline in adults with only a high school education or less. However, the proportion of residents with only a 12th grade education is sizable, remaining at 39% throughout this period. Taking time to assess whether local economic development opportunities might be impeded by the presence of a sizeable number of adults with no education beyond high school may be worthy of attention. On the other hand, 30% of adult residents in the region have an associate's, bachelor's or advanced degree, but that figure is 8% less than the overall figure for the state of Nebraska and 7% lower than the South Dakota study region.

A careful look at job expansion in this Nebraska pilot region reveals that major job gains occurred in health care and social assistance as well as finance and insurance. While the latter constitute higher-wage positions (on average $46,626/a), the growing health care jobs are largely personal care and service or health care support positions, which have lower wages ($34,374/a). Moreover, real earnings per worker is over $4,500 less than the South Dakota pilot region. Local leaders may wish to explore strategies to enhance the creation of higher-wage, higher-quality work opportunities for residents in this region.