A cluster is a regional concentration of related industries. Clusters may consist of companies, suppliers, and service providers, as well as government agencies and other institutions. They emerge naturally in the market process, providing productivity benefits to companies as they grow in size.

Research over the last decade has shown that clusters are a striking feature of all successful and growing economies. They play a fundamental role in driving regional competitiveness by encouraging higher rates of job growth, wage growth, new business formation, and innovation in the regions they are located in.

Clusters capture important linkages of technology, skills, and information that cut across firms and industries. Moreover, viewing a group of companies and institutions as a cluster highlights opportunities for mutual improvement and provides a framework for organizing policy action and public-private collaboration.

The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project has identified 51 types of clusters in the U.S. economy. Examples of prominent clusters in the United States include financial services in New York City, information technology in Silicon Valley, video production and distribution in Los Angeles, and biopharmaceuticals in Boston.


Questions?
Contact us at cmp@hbs.edu

http://clustermapping.us
Mapping a nation of regional clusters

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The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project is a national economic initiative that aims to strengthen U.S. competitiveness by understanding the economic performance of clusters and regions across the United States. It is based at the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School, with support from a number of academic and regional partners and a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration. The project provides an interactive website for user-driven, visual data on clusters and regions across the United States. It benchmarks the economic performance of individual clusters and regional business environments, and also provides a community for organizations, policymakers, and researchers to share and discuss best practices in economic development, policy and innovation.

By partnering with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Department of Commerce, this project addresses key policy implications of clusters as an instrument to reinvigorate U.S. competitiveness and lay the foundations for more sustainable economic growth.

The U.S. Cluster Mapping Project produced an unprecedented algorithm that enables the systematic generation and comparison of clusters covering the entire U.S. economy, providing policymakers with the data and facts needed to drive economic development. The project aims to bridge data into action and impact among regional economies across the United States. Using the website’s tools, state and local policymakers can build and customize their own maps and charts, focusing on a particular region or cluster, or even comparing its performance to that of other areas. The data exploration tools are user-friendly and interactive, and employ state-of-the-art geographic and charting visualizations that allow for the data generated to be easily shared and applied to regional strategies, policies, and programs.

The objective of cluster mapping is to create a comprehensive dataset on the presence of clusters across geographies. By partnering with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Department of Commerce, this project addresses key policy implications of clusters as an instrument to reinvigorate U.S. competitiveness and lay the foundations for more sustainable economic growth. The project aims to bridge data into action and impact among regional economies across the United States. Using the website’s tools, state and local policymakers can build and customize their own maps and charts, focusing on a particular region or cluster, or even comparing its performance to that of other areas. The data exploration tools are user-friendly and interactive, and employ state-of-the-art geographic and charting visualizations that allow for the data generated to be easily shared and applied to regional strategies, policies, and programs.

The cluster mapping data provides a lens to understand the underlying drivers of a region’s unique mix of jobs, relative wages, employment growth, formation of new firms, and patenting performance. It also reveals new insights on the role of strong clusters in driving regional economic performance and strategic competitive advantages for firms.

As Executive Director of South Carolina’s non-profit council on competitiveness, Laura McKinney is responsible for developing a cluster strategy to strengthen the economic competitiveness of South Carolina. In particular, she is interested in how clusters are steering the state’s economy and having a measurable impact on its success. Together with New Carolina’s executive committee and task forces, Laura has been using the U.S. Cluster Mapping website as a one-stop source for data to incorporate in a comprehensive statewide competitiveness index for South Carolina. The website provides her with the metrics to benchmark the outcomes of SC clusters against that of clusters in other U.S. states. She and her team are now better positioned to take the next step in producing an unprecedented index that informs the competitive position of South Carolina’s clusters in the nation.