

Meeting Notes

DATE February 16, 2012

PURPOSE ED Work Group Meeting

FROM Ron Townley and Kate O'Hara

ATTENDEES – see attached

HANDOUTS GroWNC single page description, Calendar, January Launch Notes, Consortium Members List, Consortium Agreements (as needed)

Notes in blue, **not italicized** are from breakout group in the **large** conference room.

Notes in blue, **italicized** are from the breakout group in the **middle** conference room.

Group Discussion #1:

- What do you see as the greatest economic development opportunities for the GroWNC region (Buncombe, Henderson, Haywood, Madison & Transylvania Counties)?
 - “Gro” of WNC is relevant to land use (agriculture and forests sited), and natural resources.
 - Cross County Project Implementation – A regional approach with community and localized niches within those regional priorities;
 - Unnoticed infrastructure related to quality of life;
 - High skills relationship to higher education is key. This region, especially outside the Asheville area has been hard hit. Education and Continuing Education is critical.
 - People born here want to be included in Economic Development discussion and be part of a strategy of moving from “struggling” to being part of “prosperity”. Example: Nut Butter production in TN employing local folks in growing and production.
 - Going beyond tourism & low paying service jobs through an “innovation ecosystem” that we will need to define for ourselves. It is also about education.
 - Local Manufacturers are adding jobs (both rehiring and new positions).
 - Community Colleges are strong at basic levels of education (GEDs, life skills training, etc.). This is a foundation to encourage more advanced training that is sometimes available but not being tapped.

- *We need to develop economic opportunities that play to our natural assets; tourism is a large part of our economic engine but is seasonal.*
- *We need to develop industries that are tourism-related- full time, all year long*
- *We need a regional trail system*
- *We should expand on an existing business base- bikes, breweries, our food system business, natural products; pharmaceuticals*
- *We have a good broad band access; we need to build on that*
- *Our geography is a double-edged sword; good for tourism but hard for development*

Group Discussion #2:

- What do you see as challenges to development opportunities?
 - How do we make it easier for people and businesses to move through government systems?
 - How do we leverage our unique natural, social, and other capital assets (that need to be further defined)? Example: Our “Bring Your Own Job” (BYOJ) entrepreneurial culture that exists in many of the communities.
 - Technology education and training is lacking in this region (assumption should be checked). Greenville, SC community colleges collaboration with the ED community cited as an example of success. It was noted that our region is different from theirs and we need to define our unique advantages. Group mentioned: local food movement, clean energy initiatives, crafts, culture, music, health care field, global livability culture, some “very high tech – clean tech”;
 - Conflict between competing land uses; How to avoid homogenization and becoming “Anywhere USA”;
 - Community Development is part of Economic Development and realizing poverty issues and as part of the plan. Issues include mobility, education, meeting minimum needs through strategies to “raise people up” to middle class;
 - How do you measure success? Getting people to middle class that is resilient and lasting (for them and community as a whole).
 - We need solid data to correlate issues around talent, skills, wages, opportunities, etc.
 - ENGINEERS are needed in this region.
 - Our region starts too late in letting people know what soft-skills are needed to shift with rapid changes to the employment marketplace – it was noted they do exist but outreach needs to target folks when they are younger.
 - Live skills need to be brought to people in their communities.
 - *There is a lack of capital & need for investors*

- *Banks do not do “asset-based” lending*
 - *We need a more supportive network for businesses*
 - *We need to promote our area so that we don’t lose our young professionals*
 - The major challenge we have here is a talent shortage, unlike some other areas. Talent goes where it wants to live; work is going to go where the talent is. How do we attract talent?
 - *We need to augment our community college systems; they are very good*
 - *Workforce development exists but not everyone is aware of the opportunity*
 - our community colleges are actively engaged in training
 - budget cuts challenge this
 - not getting to students at a young enough age to get them engaged
 - tuition just raised 10% again
 - *Can we bring back the “Junior Achievement” model?*
 - *Can we build on the RTP model- the collaborative thought process, not necessarily the universities?*
 - *We need a broad-based economic development strategy that is connected across the system; if gas prices go up and tourism drops what is our back up?*
 - There are potential conflicts between land uses, how do they support one another and how do we plan for them to coexist
 - 1/6 of the people in this area are living in poverty. How do we keep them in mind as we move forward and address this issue?
 - How do we deal with the lack of population with higher education degree
- Have you experienced any of these challenges?
 - Manpower: “Access to talent”: Business is done different from 4-years ago with companies going to where the talent is (not talent moving to where the companies are located).

The group nominated Joseph Naylor, Branch Manager of *Manpower*, as its Chair.

Staff has reviewed the memo from BBP, the consulting partner who is reviewing our regional plans and has recommended that it not be sent to the committee because it is not satisfactory in content. Staff have been notified that BBP has chosen another consultant to work on the ED plans; we have a teleconference scheduled.

Once the memo is edited, staff will share with the workgroup via email.

The next meeting is 3-5 pm on Tuesday, March 13, 2012 at LOSRC.