

Bright Futures Together

Bright Futures Together; Phase 1 Project Description

- ACCE award received to participate in Ford Foundation Fellowship to put together a collaboration aimed at improved area planning and sustainable development
- Participate in the year-long fellowship process in consultation with colleagues at ACCE, development experts throughout the U.S., and local development experts
- Meet with local and area stakeholders for initial discussions and buy-in
- Establish a preliminary planning team among interested participants in the adjoining counties in the two state area
- Move to establish process for ongoing conversation/collaboration regarding the status and development of the economy among private and public sector leaders in Wayne County and surrounding Indiana/Ohio communities
- Determine best means, process, and available resources to benchmark current socioeconomic conditions for the area
- Hold summit(s) to determine desired employer/employment objectives
- Determine necessary resources and changes required in order to reach employer/employment objectives
- Transform planning team to an implementation or facilitating team for ongoing communications as needed
- **Phase 1 information becomes footing for a Phase 2 strategic reaction within and among participating neighboring Indiana and Ohio communities**
- **Begin major foundation fund solicitation for Phase 2 (i.e. Ford, Lilly) through the Chamber Center for Excellence**

Progress Made

- Ongoing consultation underway with ACCE through the Ford Foundation RSD Fellowship
- Chamber Name Change, Plan of Work, Logo
- Local newspaper on board to highlight Bright Futures Together initiative
- News Releases, Op Ed column done
- \$5,000 sustainability grant seed money received and marketing underway
- Young Professional Staff Position Funded at WC Area Chamber
- New EDC President with Regional Development Background in place
- I.U. Chancellor with regional development experience now on Chamber board
- Earlham College VP with regional development ties now Chair-elect of Chamber board
- Chamber Board officers engaged with challenging questions
- Full Chamber Board Discussions underway
- Chamber Center for Excellence (501c3) established
- Grant research is underway for the Center for Excellence to seek and receive Start up and Phase 2 funding
- **Chamber - EDC Executive Committees Plan to Meet in April 2009 to discuss Bright Futures objectives, process, and local stakeholders**

Insights Thus Far

- The majority, but not all, of early project conversations have been encouraging
- **An economy without borders resonates**, especially for predominately rural neighboring communities in west central Ohio and east central Indiana
- **The need for better communications, cooperation, and collaboration within and among small communities in west central Ohio and east central Indiana resonates**
- There may be significant interest in improving communications among existing development based organizations but little or no interest has been encountered to create a new regional corporation
- Defining terms and speaking the same language is a challenge; i.e. Regional Sustainable Development means different things to different people
- Navigating around and overcoming narrow organizational and political interests is time consuming and difficult
- Too many studies and projects have not mobilized adequate resources and resolve to produce desired results
- There is general support for our need to (1) benchmark where we are, (2) contrast where we are with where we want to be, i.e. jobs we want to attract and retain, and (3) identify things we need to change in order to compete and succeed
- There is, at the very least, a conceptual consensus in our need to be smart and collaborative as we establish and carry out targeted strategic development efforts to significantly improve the local economy and quality of life
- A Chamber of Commerce is well positioned to bring people together for these conversations because of the natural connection to topics of development and commerce and because of diverse membership and connection in the various communities

Help Wanted

- Refining the process and proceeding in a non-threatening way to identify key local and area stakeholders
- Bringing people together to discuss Bright Futures Together process and objectives
- Determining best resources, processes, and sources to benchmark the area economy.
- Planning and carrying out area summits to establish desired job targets and identify changes necessary to attract, retain and support desired jobs
- Creating a process and a culture to encourage collaboration among stakeholders