

Western New York Regional Economic Development Meeting – September 6, 2011

The Lieutenant Governor and Co-Chairs opened the meeting with remarks to the Council. Mr. Tripathi stressed the importance of taking a regional approach to economic development. Mr. Zemsky then summarized the progress made by the Council in having work groups analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) associated with ten identified focus areas. Mr. Zemsky said that it would be helpful to get input from the Council on the results of the SWOT analyses. The Council would also need to develop a vision statement once public input had been received through upcoming public forums. Finally, the Council would need to discuss Priority Project Selection Criteria and adopt Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Endorsement Standards.

Opening remarks were followed by presentations by the chairs of each work group on the results of SWOT analyses. Reports were presented in three groups, each of which was followed by comments, questions and answers.

1) Higher Education, Job Readiness and Life/Health Sciences

- Higher Education work group:
 - Has \$3.5 billion economic impact on the region associated with 21 colleges.
 - Not having a large presence in downtown Buffalo is not considered a weakness for Higher Education because SUNY Buffalo is in the city and the UB 2020 plan will expand this presence.
 - Repair the leaky pipeline: refers to K-12, specifically in buffalo public schools where the core graduation rates are falling.
- The Job Readiness work group:
 - Should note that support for entrepreneurs is difficult to find;
 - There is a misalignment between job providers and job seekers.
 - There is no good “nuts and bolts” training for entrepreneurs at the high school level.
 - We need to develop career interests as early as elementary school as well as stress the importance of good work ethics
- The Life/Health Sciences work group:
 - Should consider where costs are going to be cut.
 - There is an ample amount of existing studies regarding this industry, we should dissect them and extract the main findings (problems, proposed solutions, etc.)
- There is a need to align the work groups to maximize their impact and get tangible results. This will be addressed as the outcome of future Council meeting will be a convergence of strategies.
- Work groups must identify impediments and seek to modify these in order to move forward.
- Opportunities identified by work groups should show the future so that strategies developed within the plan can come together for a common purpose.

2) Smart Growth, Leveraging Natural Resources, Bi-National & Logistics, Tourism/Marketing

- Agriculture should be pulled out of the Natural Resources work group; it is industry specific. Food processing fits better with Advanced Manufacturing.
- Agriculture presents a huge marketing opportunity and needs to be considered separately.
 - Treat like “Disney land”: have the regions inter-market each other

- Smart Growth work group:
 - Home rule precludes eliminating sprawl; need to recognize that some sprawl might be necessary to attract industry.
 - Incentivize policies that oppose sprawl and remediate brownfields.
 - The waterfront is an incentive to redensify older neighborhoods
 - Must stop focusing on silver bullet projects
- Tourism/Marketing work group:
 - Need to take a regional approach. Counties are promoting themselves when the region would be better served by pooling resources.
- The Bi-National & Logistics work group:
 - Might benefit from having Canadians represented to discuss mismatched regulations and common opportunities.
 - There are many existing bi-national partnerships in law enforcement and tourism; however, the last bi-national summit was held during the Pataki administration.
 - Canadians have protectionist policies with regard to the wine industry; there is a need to find the right people to overcome these impediments and advance tourism. (overlapping theme between Bi-National and tourism)

3) Advanced Manufacturing, Entrepreneurship/Business Development, Professional Services

- Advanced Manufacturing work group:
 - The top three needs for the region are skilled labor, a quick and reasonable business environment, and sustainable support from educational institutions and suppliers.
 - Strategies should address the problem of where to find placement for the undereducated to develop and follow a career path.
 - The “brain-drain” is undermining the sustainability of the region.
 - There is a need to build upon the K-12 pipeline to prepare students for higher education; a developing underclass undermines the region.
 - The marketing and branding opportunities for advanced manufacturing developed by Buffalo could be adapted to the region.
 - Advanced manufacturing strategy must get the word out that there are good-paying careers in order to attract younger workers.
- Entrepreneurship/Business Development work group:
 - There are no resources for “feel good” general marketing; it is necessary to deal with business owners one-on-one.
- Professional Services work group:
 - Some professional services are subsidy dependent versus organic. Subsidies can be useful in that name recognition attracts others to the area.

There followed a presentation regarding the CFA Endorsement Standards and Priority Project Selection Criteria by the Executive Director. The proposed CFA Endorsement Standards [*Appendix A] were adopted by the Council subject to: changing “Points Awarded” to “Point Range”, clarification of scoring ranges for “Process”, “Strategies” and “Implementation”, and addition of a quantitative component to “Leverage Resources”. The eight Priority Project Selection Criteria [*Appendix B] (“Promotes Smart Growth”, “Creates Jobs”, “Maximizes Financial Return”, “Oriented towards Young Adults”, “Builds upon Strengths”, “Regional”, “Improves Region’s Image” and “Inclusive” were adopted as presented. The Council will need to approve a scoring system and mechanism at future meetings.

The council meeting concluded with remarks from the Co-Chairs. Mr. Zemsky said that the Council must determine how to best move to develop collaborative strategies. He noted that the work groups are where the strategies will originate and he will therefore remain engaged with all work groups. Mr. Tripathi noted some common themes in the Council's discussion, such as a "leaky pipeline" regarding education, a mismatch between job skills and industry needs, and deficient infrastructure. The need is to combine these themes into strategies that will benefit the region.

Appendix A

**Western New York Regional Economic Development Council
Consolidated Funding Application Endorsement Standards – September 2011**

Scoring Criteria	CFA Endorsement Standard	Points Range	Maximum Points
Vision	Advances	1	1
	Does not advance	0	
Process	Strong community and stakeholder support	2	2
	Limited Community and stakeholder support	1	
	No community or stakeholder support	0	
Strategies	Degree to which the project is related to Council strategies; multiple strategies will receive more points.	1- 7	7
	Not related to Council strategy	0	
Implementation	Highly likely to be implemented within 5 years	3	3
	Likely to be implemented within 5 years	1-2	
	Unlikely to be implemented within 5 years	0	
Leverage Resources	Leverages private resources	3	3
	Leverages other public resources	1-2	
	Does not leverage resources	0	
Performance Measures	Quantitative performance measures	3-4	4
	Qualitative performance measures	1-2	
	No performance measures	0	
Total			20

Suggested Priority Initiative Selection Criteria

Promotes Smart Growth
Creates Jobs
Maximizes Financial Return
Oriented to Young Adults
Builds upon Strengths
Regional
Improves Region's Image
Inclusive