

Instructions for Reviewing Priority Projects

To be eligible for inclusion in the Council's recommended priority projects to receive funding, a project or action must meet three separate thresholds:

- 1) Does it fit one of the strategies identified in the Strategic Plan?
- 2) Does it create/retain/fill jobs and/or provide a positive return on investment?
- 3) Can it be implemented?

If a project fails to meet any of the three thresholds, it will not be included in the Priority Project List. If a project meets the three thresholds, then it will be scored according to how well it meets the eight Priority Project Selection Criteria adopted by the Council. Each project will be awarded from zero to five points for each criterion, for a maximum possible score of forty points.

- 1) Create/Retain/Fill Jobs – The project should result in new jobs being created, existing jobs being retained or unemployed/underemployed being placed in jobs. The number of jobs created, retained or filled as the result of a project should be considered within the context of the size of the business and the amount of funding required. Ideally, the project should create, retain or fill jobs that pay wages above the median average wage for the region. Also, the project should have a high “multiplier effect” through indirect job creation. Or a project should result in placing a number of unemployed or underemployed residents in jobs.
- 2) Maximizes Return on Investment - All projects are expected to leverage private investment and/or non-state public investment. A ratio of 4:1 is generally accepted by the State. The more leverage of non-state dollars, the better. Other factors that might improve a project's score include leverage of non-state public funds, the value of products and services exported from the region, the value of purchases within the region.
- 3) Inclusive – A project should promote diversity and reduce disparities within the region. A project with a goal or objective of increasing the number of underserved populations in the workforce would have a significant impact. A project that conforms to established State diversity practices by utilizing certified minority- or women-owned business enterprises (MWBES) would fulfill this criterion. A project with no commitment to diversity would not meet the criterion.
- 4) Promotes Smart Growth – A project should adhere to smart growth principles to integrate economic development and job creation with community quality-of-life by preserving and enhancing the built and natural environments. Smart growth principles include “infill” development, preservation of natural and cultural resources, reuse of buildings and brownfields, and energy sustainability. A project that meets one or more smart growth principles would fulfill the criterion, while a project that encourages sprawl would not.

- 5) Oriented to Young Adults – A project should try to attract and retain young adults (18 to 35 years) to counteract a lack of in-migration to the region.
- 6) Builds upon Strengths – A project should enhance the region’s existing strengths to achieve the largest impact with limited resources. A project that involves one or more of the seven target industries identified by the Council (logistics, tourism, agriculture, advanced manufacturing, professional services, higher education and life & health sciences) would be aligned with this criterion. Similarly, a project that builds upon natural resource assets, such as fresh water and renewable energy, would be aligned. A project in an industry unrelated to a target industry or that does not build upon a natural resource asset would not be aligned.
- 7) Regional – The Strategic Plan is intended to be regional in scope. A project that has an impact (jobs, investment or visitors) in three or more counties would be directly aligned with this criterion. Projects impacting two counties would be aligned with the criteria, while a region within a single county would be only somewhat aligned. A project that has only local impact does not meet the criterion.
- 8) Improves Region’s Image – A project should enhance the perception of the region to attract businesses and workers. A project with a goal or objective of improving regional image would have a significant impact. A project that is not likely to change regional image does not meet the criterion.

All projects identified by work groups or Council members as priority projects and that have completed a Consolidated Funding Application by October 31st for the Regional Council Fund or the Excelsior Program will be scored.

Scoring will be done by Council member volunteers, excluding ex-officio (elected) members. Council members will be asked to volunteer to do this scoring; Council members are not required to score the projects.

To ensure that the final priority project list implements a true regional vision for the five counties, the Co-Chairs will not participate in the scoring. Once Council members score each project, those scores will be averaged and sent to the Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs will then consider the scores and will make final recommendations to the Council on projects to be included in the Implementation Agenda.