

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEETING

The Regional Economic Development (RED) team met May 21 at 3 PM in the Chamber of Commerce Offices. The following team members were in attendance:

Ed Graham	Chair
Cary Fordyce	Oglethorpe
Doug Lowry	Clarke
Drew Page	Clarke
Mark Peevy	Walton
Don Sumner	Clarke
Jim Sykes	Clarke
Flora Tydings	Oglethorpe
Marvin White	Madison
Laura Meadows	UGA/Clarke
Ed Perkins	Noramco
Kenny Beck	Madison, from JEMC, sent by Marvin White
Rich Cary	Chamber of Commerce
Joe Whorton	Staff

The following were absent:

Jim Jones	Clarke
Brian Brodrick	Oconee
Margret Wagner-Dahl	Clarke

After introductions the Chair gave a brief outline of the mission of the RED team as follows: The objective of RED is to create an organization that will sustain Regional Economic Development with an objective of creating a model of a regional entity by the end of the calendar year. This initiative was drive by two sources; Governor Perdue's strategic initiative for the 10 county golden crescent calling for a strategic initiative in the region based on life sciences and second the work of PPA calling for regional economic development collaboration in the Athens region. Timing is to have a model of the sustainable process in place by the end of the year. Also, suggested that those on the committee would lead discussions with business and Govt. leaders in their region at that time. Objective is to gain support for this regional initiative ASAP.

The chair also made mention of the need for the group to: reflect best practices (ie the Valley Partnership in Columbus), create measures of progress (score card) and develop a strategy to market the regional effort. This marketing effort would be anchored in clear statements of how each participating entity would benefit from such an effort. Example of Novartis impact on region and state using the UGA economic model could be a good tool in shaping this strategy.

The chair then asked participants to given a few comments on their interest or concerns about the effort to develop a regional economic development entity.

Go round:

Rich Cary: Tough job selling and defining assets to support a regional ED story

Mark Peevy: recognize the need to pull workforce from surrounding counties to make any development work

Doc: “wonderful idea” if region is prosperous, so are the counties in the region. This has been talked about for long time

Laura Meadows: University big employer in region, commercialize research; have a university anchor as an asset. The University is regional by its very nature.

Jim Sikes: Regional ED is a given, market is defined by a region and its resources

Ed Perkins: as an area tremendous advantage but when responsibility is divided into govt. units it tends not to work

Doug Lowry: Key to making it work is to secure funding for marketing and fulltime staff

Flora Tydings: The technical college has a 10 county service area. We need a proactive, not a re-active strategy, need to sell as a region as a whole

Kenny Beck: need to identify the counties have in common

Drew Page: Key, build trust among competitors; we are always regional we just don't act like it; prospects don't care where county line is; need operational funds plus marketing (local control over operations) + regional pool to fund marketing

Go to trade shows (3)

Ads (3)

Sees the outcome a marketing strategy not necessarily an organization

Rich Cary: Long overdue, buy in from local communities critical.

Don Sumner: not convinced that all counties have same vocabulary – need to get everyone on same page

After a brief discussion the following were listed as potential participating counties:

- Barrow
- Walton
- Oconee
- Madison
- Jackson
- Oglethorpe
- Clarke

The chair then asked the group for what they wanted to hear in future meetings.

1. Who do you want to hear from:

- Youngquist: George Israel, stat.
- Rope Roberts and Dennis Chastain who do economic development for Georgia Power and EMC in the state.
- As witness of successes hear from the Valley Partnership
- State Dept. EcD
- Other entities – primary focus on how they organized and got support, how they function and how they are funded.

2. What to pursue (questions – info, etc.):

Seek buy in from local govt. counties, need a product to sell
Novartis, debrief

Observations: need discussions on what trust looks like when counties work together

Need new language to label initiative to make clear what it is and isn't.

3. What do we want to occur:

Flora Tidings observed that the outcome needs to respect what is in place and not dismantle but add value through collaboration. The first step should be to define what this group is about and what is not about.

Two Subcommittees

Jim Sykes: Definition of regional economic development entity subcommittee

Don Sumner: Public education subcommittee

Sumner: Next steps

Define Regional ED

Novartis Debrief (CVIIOG) – Rich Clarke, next meeting

George Israel, next meeting

Upcoming meeting schedule:

June 1: George Israel, 10am, Chamber of Commerce, brunch and discussion to follow

June 15: State Dept. Economic Development, Novartis debrief

July TBD: Fanning Center regional Economic Development expert