

ED Advisory Group Retreat Report 2005

Presented by:

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Retreat Summary

- 22 ED Advisory Members and staff met for two hours on Friday, October 21 at the YMCA Camp Clay Nature Center to review and revamp the ED Strategic Plan.
- Breakout groups reviewed the three ED strategies to develop new objectives for 2006. They then grouped and prioritized objectives.
- This report summarizes the groupings, objectives and priorities (listed in order of importance).

ED Strategies

- Business Retention & Expansion
- Entrepreneurship & Business Recruitment
- Tourism & Main Street redevelopment

Strategy #1: Entrepreneurship and Business Recruitment

- Infrastructure
- Marketing
- Financing
- Linkages
- Education

Grouping #1: Infrastructure

- Having a detailed listing of available services and infrastructure composition, natural gas, electric, water, fiber optics, etc.
- Advance telecommunications

Grouping #2: Marketing

- Regional partnership
- Utilize LMI website for workforce information and use Ohio's Blackbelt team for demo or training
- Need to grow the population so new ventures will see the community as improving/growing.
- Visit expanding businesses.
- Web advertising, advertise in trade publications
- Alliance with state and regional offices
- Differentiate between strategy for microenterprise and entrepreneurship growth opportunity.
- Specialize!
- Select types of businesses we want, then utilize people with influence to help sell the community to the businesses.
- Entrepreneurship on a regional basis. Utilize the region as a marketplace.

Grouping #3: Financing

- Seed Financing and access to capital
- Higher level of private sector involvement and investment
- Need to develop a funding source for ED that is stable year after year
- Develop financing packages that are easy to process

Grouping #4: Linkages

- Develop local support network
- Develop short term training to target industry needs in demand occupations.
- Existing manufacturing business recommendations can compliment and create partnerships
- Target service type businesses such as medical that have a regional market—they are less likely to move
- Develop group programs to reduce costs, such as workers compensation.
- Talk to suppliers that provide for firms in area about locating here.

Grouping #5: Education

- Develop talent and entrepreneurial skills through education
- “Eye on the Prize” business plan competition
- Use WIA training grants to train in house employees for skills upgrade
- Attend development seminars (ED office)
- Educate community on needs

Strategy #2: Business Retention & Expansion

- Workforce development and recruitment
- Promotion awareness and education
- Financing programs and databases

Grouping #1: Workforce Development and Recruitment

- Professionally prepared recruitment presentation—verbal and written.
- Develop a youth awareness initiative.
- Work with Chamber to provide opportunities for current businesses to network with each (i.e. H.R. Group)
- Expand BR&E to regional partnership
- Make list of all activities available in Van Wert area.
- Review training programs available through Vantage

Grouping #2: Promotion Awareness and Education

- Business testimonials (3 votes)
- Expand current BR&E visits (2 votes)
- Promote a healthy city (1 vote)
- Promote our services to small business (1 vote)
- Promote existing and new things to do in Van Wert.
- Continue to target “desired” business that match our requirements.
- New sign for incubator
- Communication, trade shows, training programs
- Vertical and horizontal integration

Grouping #3: Financing Programs and Databases

- Develop a general recruiting strategy for employees.
- Help current businesses become more aware of local and state loans and grants.
- Aggressively pursue available grants at all levels.
- Continue to provide low interest financial assistance packages.
- Increase funding for RLF.
- Strategies for attracting/retaining younger workers.
- Tax abatement programs must be aggressive.
- Mentoring programs
- Help existing businesses stay competitive with new advances.
- Provide for continuing education, class at Vantage.

Strategy #3: Tourism and Main Street Redevelopment

- Downtown Design (consumer friendly)
- Downtown Business Recruitment (unique shopping)
- Promotions & Publications (central mega location)

Grouping #1: Downtown Design

- Get public involved in Main Street revitalization
- Provide for visual changes to show evidence of improvements downtown
- Close Main St. from Jefferson to Washington
- Close Main St. from Washington to Market
- Create streetscape in closed area
- Create a common sidewalk design (bricks, trees, planters) that will tie in all Main St. locations
- Eliminate parking issue

Grouping #2: Downtown Business Recruitment

- Find a strong anchor business downtown
- More shops downtown including antiques, coffee shops
- Provide for specialty shops such as ice cream parlor, gift shops, galleries
- Provide for arts & crafts center at Old Walmart or Homeguard building

Grouping #3: Promotions and Publications

- Run stories (on placements and in other locations) on locally owned (downtown and throughout the county) businesses and how they have grown--testimonials
- Provide for signage on 30 & 127 to promote downtown and southside businesses.
- Provide for one Central location for information

2006 Objectives – Program and Office Improvements

1. Expand the BR&E program to include increased visits to all large and many small businesses. Report results to media and service clubs.
2. Support and enhance RLF program with new funding through direct loans whenever possible. Increase exposure for program, including testimonials.
3. Support and enhance incubator program through “Eye on the Prize” business plan competition, new signage, promotions, and site visits.
4. Complete process of revamping building and sites and business databases.
5. Utilize WALT tracking program to catalog, track and report on prospective, targeted new businesses.

2006 Objectives – Public Relations and Outreach

1. Develop testimonials—community, workplace and workforce, to distribute to local/regional media.
2. Implement brand for Van Wert County in all ED and CVB marketing materials.
3. Increase efforts to promote Main Street and Van Wert County as a good place to locate.
4. Provide for information and continuing education in areas of entrepreneurship, starting businesses, and informing existing business on available programs.

2006 Objectives – Collaboration

1. Work with Chamber to strengthen local employer support network through HR Group and Roundtable for southside development.
2. Work with Chamber to develop and promote group programs or initiatives, such as WorkingEd, to improve efficiencies and reduce employer costs.
3. Work with Main Street to ensure collaboration on all phases of the revitalization process.
4. Participate in regular meetings with Chamber, Main Street, and CVB to ensure adequate implementation of brand and work towards combined location.
5. Build regional partnerships initiative that will include launching of a regionally-based program or project.

2006 Outcomes

- Increased number of jobs
- Economic impact of jobs (higher level skills & wages)
- Increased tax base
- Targeted sector(s) attracted or retained
- Residents retained/recruited back
- Number of businesses assisted
- Alliances developed and leveraged
- Self-sustaining programming
- Community expectations met or exceeded