Southwest Michigan Regional Prosperity Initiative

August 6, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Jill Bland, Pat Karr, Corey Carolla, Michael Evans, Jason Latham, Richard Remus, Jon Start

Committee Members Absent: Dennis Berkebile, Barbara Craig, Ben Damerow, Jan Franz, Todd Gustafson, Luann Harden, Lynn Johnson, Jan Karazan, Juanita Miller, Ron Reid,

Also Present: Lee Adams, Peter Dams, Rebecca Harvey

Welcome and Introductions

It was determined that Vice-Chair Jon Start would serve as Acting Chair in the absence of the Chair (Ben Damerow).

Introductions of Committee members and guests were made.

It was noted that a quorum of the Committee was not present. Those present agreed that scheduled action items would be moved to the September 3, 2015 meeting agenda. The agenda was then accepted as modified.

Adoption of Minutes

It was noted that the June 4, 2015 Committee meeting minutes had not been provided in the meeting material but would be added to the September meeting material for action in September.

Introduction of New Members (Part 1)

Lee Adams stated that, consistent with the Committee's decision in June to expand the membership of the Committee to include representation from the added sectors, suggested contacts had been made. He advised that confirmation of new membership has been difficult due to timing. The Committee agreed that the new sectors would be contacted for membership at the close of Fiscal Year 2015.

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RPI Subcommittee Process

Peter Dams presented a graphic representing the RPI Subcommittee process. The graphic was developed to provide clarity in the role of the Subcommittees in the refinement of the Plan goals/opportunities and in the recommendation of priority project areas and projects for Committee approval.

Lee Adams updated the Committee on the status of the Subcommittee work to date. He noted the following:

- LOIs related to the Community Development and Education 'priority project areas' were sent out and included a response deadline of July 31, 2015. Nine (9) responses have been received.
- The RFPs for projects related to Community Development and Education have been written and will go out next week.
- The Community Development and Education RFPs will have a response deadline of August 21, 2015.
- Subcommittee recommendations on proposed Community Development and Education projects will be submitted for Committee action at the September 3, 2015 Committee meeting.

In response to Committee questions, Lee Adams noted that the referenced LOIs were sent to all of the contacts invited to the Community Development and Education partner meetings. The contact lists represented approximately 250 Community Development- and 200 Education-related organizations. It was noted that the project selection time frame was compressed to respond to the State's directive to expend RPI funds on projects yet this fiscal year (by September 30, 2015).

The Committee agreed that project proposals submitted just beyond the deadline would still be considered in response to noted delays in the receipt of mailed RFPs.

Additional questions were posed regarding the guidelines applied by the Subcommittees in the recommendation of projects.

Lee Adams stated that the scoring criteria used in 2014 for selecting opportunities within each goal set and again this year in prioritizing project areas would be used. He explained that the Committee had expressed support at the June meeting for the application of said scoring criteria to project selection, noting 'connection to other sectors' and 'access to funding' as additional

criteria to be considered.   It was then suggested that the 'amount of the requested funding as a % of the project budget' be an element of the 'access to funding' criterion.

It was agreed that the RPI staff would develop the scoring criteria to be applied by all of the Subcommittees in the formulation of project recommendations to the Committee.

Michael Evans opined that the success of the RPI will require that the regional partners perceive the method for the distribution of RPI funds to be fair. He further noted that the Committee may want to consider formalizing Subcommittee membership as the role and funding of the RPI solidifies and there is increased interest in Subcommittee participation.

Lee Adams explained that the current Subcommittee process was modeled after the CBDG committee structure. The Committee expressed support for such an approach.

Michael Evans added that the Committee should strive to frame the selection of projects around the question: 'How will this project make us more competitive as a region?' and/or 'How will this project make our region more prosperous?' General Committee support was expressed, with a reiteration as to the importance of articulating the project selection criteria and the ability to support/defend the decision to fund a project.

General discussion ensued regarding how the RPI budget will be managed with respect to project funding. Lee Adams provided an overview of the current budget and noted that the projects currently under consideration are well within the RPI budget for 2015.

Updates on State Projects w/ RPI Requirements

Jon Start stated that no MPO-related projects have been announced.

Corey Carolla noted that the 'RPI Strategies' communications project scheduled for discussion offers a systematic approach to this kind of communication between regional partners.

Additional Infrastructure Asset Map

Lee Adams stated that an additional infrastructure-related asset map had been developed in response to the July 2, 2015 Infrastructure Partner Meeting discussion. He presented the 'Broadband Availability by Type' asset map for inclusion in the regional asset inventory.

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Adopt Infrastructure Priority Project Areas

Lee Adams presented the completed work of the Infrastructure Subcommittee. He stated that the Subcommittee had worked to both further develop the goal/opportunities set forth in the Plan, as well as to prioritize the 'project areas' identified at the July Infrastructure Partner meeting. He then reviewed the list of 'priority project areas' recommended by the Infrastructure Subcommittee. Per the adopted process, the Subcommittee had prioritized the identified project areas and provided the top five (5) project areas for Committee consideration. The proposed list of recommended 'priority project areas' is incorporated herein by reference.

It was noted that the proposed 'priority project areas' could not be officially adopted by the Committee given the lack of quorum present. It was agreed that action on the recommendation would be scheduled for the September 3, 2015 Committee meeting. Lee Adams requested that the LOIs for the proposed 'priority project areas' be distributed prior to Committee adoption to keep the project selection process on schedule. Committee members agreed, noting past Committee support of Subcommittee recommendations and the Infrastructure Subcommittee's unanimous support of the proposed 'priority project areas'.

Adopt RPI Strategies Subcommittee Project Recommendation

Corey Carolla explained that the RPI Strategies Subcommittee had identified a 'window of opportunity' to move forward a communications project that would serve to implement the RPI Strategies goal and many identified opportunities. He provided an overview of the Business U Software investigated by the Subcommittee. Through a detailed webinar with Business U, a discussion of the software capabilities, cost, and implementation process ensued.

Committee members questioned the compatibility of Business U with existing communications software in use in the Region, its ease of use and functionality, and the cost of long-term software maintenance. It was determined that the Subcommittee should work to bring back a more specific project proposal.

Lee Adams suggested that procedurally the Subcommittee should first define the ideal communications platform for the Region. Such a determination would assist in identifying the best communications project/vendor. The Subcommittee agreed to proceed with a survey approach to defining the parameters of the Region's communications platform so that a more detailed communications project proposal can be presented in September.

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Next Steps

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for September 3, 2015. The following agenda items have been scheduled:

- Adopt Infrastructure Project Priority Areas

- Select Projects for Funding

    : Community Development
    : Education

- Review Draft Prosperity Plan – Volume 2

Adjournment