

Meeting Notes- March 13, 2012 Economic Development Workgroup

Goal Statements (drafted from meeting notes)

- A flexible, nimble economy that encourages entrepreneurship, supports existing businesses and attracts new employers.
- A diversified economy built on the region's natural competitive advantages.
- A region that supports existing businesses by promoting economies of clustering
- An economic development approach that supports regional priorities by elevating local initiatives.
- An invisible system of infrastructure that supports economic development opportunities in each county.
- A place where each individual has the opportunity to improve their employment status through job training and placement.
- An economy that supports jobs that attract our young people back to the region.

General Notes

We need better data to evaluate ED in the region.

- We need to diversify the existing base of businesses.
- This region should be self-reliant (not looking to other places for support).
- Our economy should be sustainable (cradle to cradle)
 - i.e., We grow it, refine it, sell it and recycle it.
- Our priority is taking care of existing businesses by supporting:
 - Feeder jobs/agglomerated economies/spin-offs
- Entrepreneurship focus
 - Better incomes for entrepreneurs (esp. our creative entrepreneurs: crafters, artists)



- Family-wage jobs
- Talent development
 - There is a training/jobs disconnect
 - Need more STEM programs
 - Region is aware of the needs but there aren't the people to fill the jobs
- Talent brain-drain
 - The region needs to be better at retaining talent. Lack of jobs for recent grads?
- Where are the opportunities for synergy?
 - i.e, artists→fabric workers (PT)
 - Co-Op models?
- Make it, sell it, consume it, recycle it—all in WNC
- Create Jobs
- Diversify Economy
- Focus on Existing Businesses
- Regional Opportunities
 - Crafters/Brew Cluster
- Enhance QOL (family-standard of living, living wage)
- Balanced Economy
 - We need to be exporters of our goods
- What is the WNC brand?
- Every county needs employment centers for their residents
- We need more jobs for vocational, blue-collar employees
- Every young person has a job if they want it
- Every county has employment opportunities (infrastructure supports, broadband (last mile))