

**SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STUDY**

**RESOURCE MAPPING
PROJECT**

Sponsored by

United States Department of Commerce
Economic Development Administration and
Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2004, a grant proposal was submitted by the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to the United States Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration requesting funds to support a one-year, regional, corroborative planning process. The Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission provided a local funding match. The process was divided into two phases. Following is a description of the grant proposal regarding these two phases:

Phase I: Support entrepreneurial and business development initiatives within the region.

- a. Develop survey instruments, including a list of widely accepted definitions of various services offered, and gather information from identified entrepreneurial database of services offered and required.
- b. Gather pertinent information from a sample of lenders on services provided and from entrepreneurs on services that are needed or desired.
- c. Undertake a gap analysis to identify gaps in services.
- d. Working with service providers, identify opportunities for more efficient delivery of services of entrepreneurial and business development and present a recommended plan for coordination of these programs.

Phase II: Based on the findings in Phase I, undertake the following activities to help strengthen regional partnerships.

- a. Help build momentum and initiatives for a unified, coordinated, and potentially expanded regional approach to business development and entrepreneurial support.

- b. Address any pressing communication needs among the service providers and other economic development partners in the region.
- c. Assess potential future organizational relationships among service providers and economic development partners in the regions.
- d. Recommend key marketing tools to promote business development services within the region.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives were developed around three specific areas of project research and development. The areas included resource mapping, gap analysis, and best practice models.

Resource Mapping

Goal: To support entrepreneurial and business development initiatives within the region, a resource guide will be developed that will identify available resources and provide efficient connection to identified needs of new business prospects and established businesses.

Related objectives:

- To interview, using the developed survey instrument, identified individuals in the public and private sectors at the regional and state levels who facilitate and support economic development activities of the region.
- To research local, state, and national economic development initiatives that would assist in the development of a local database format that would be efficient and effective.
- To combine the research data for the development of a localized database information service to assist economic development activities of the region.

Gap Analysis

Goal: To analyze information gathered for the purpose of gap analysis to identify existing needs for the region in economic development services.

Related objectives:

- To investigate the need and support for local and regional SCORE chapters.
- To investigate the need and support for regional and local Web sites detailing regional and local economic development information.
- To gather pertinent information from lenders on services provided and from economic development professionals on services that are needed or desired.
- To encourage, based on data gathered, corporate certification for economic development corporations throughout the region.

Best Practice Models

Goal: To provide a database that gives access throughout the region to information regarding best practice models for economic development activities.

Related objectives:

- To research local, state, and national projects to determine best practice examples applicable to the region.
- To develop a database that will efficiently and effectively provide related information on best practices to local economic development professionals in the region.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS

The basis for project research was the development of survey instruments that would direct interviews conducted with individuals involved with economic development throughout the region of southwest Wisconsin, representing both the private and public sectors. The surveys were modified to meet the specific interests and expertise of those contacted. Interviews included individuals from all six counties of southwest Wisconsin and represented the following areas:

- Economic Development Professionals--Public sector individuals whose jobs were based on economic development initiatives at the local, county, and state levels.
- Financial Institution Representatives--Executive-level financial professionals who were engaged in economic development at the local level throughout southwest Wisconsin.
- Elected Public Officials--Publicly-elected executives from municipal and county levels of government.
- Regional Entrepreneurs--Individuals from various communities of the region who had developed local businesses but failed in attempts to keep the business usable.
- Regional Entrepreneurs--Individuals from various communities of the region who were successful in business efforts and have viable and successful establishments.

A total of 75 interviews were conducted, notes were taken, information was shared, and follow-up interviews were conducted, as needed. Interviews included individuals from all six counties representing the southwest corner of Wisconsin.

Additional research to support the project included the investigation of state and national economic development resources. Research activities involved attendance at local and state sponsored conferences, participation in local and county economic development corporation meetings, surveys of related data from various state departments, and news and journal articles relevant to the process of data gathering.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS OF RESEARCH

A comprehensive report, based on the extensive research described here, includes an executive summary and was ready for distribution in the fall of 2005. The second component of the project was the development of online resources to assist entrepreneurs to obtain information and human resources necessary for business development or growth. The network was developed by WebWise Design of Fennimore, Wisconsin, and was tailor made for the region of southwest Wisconsin with links to other local, state, or national resources.

INTERVIEW/SURVEY PROCESS

The primary basis of the research for this project was face-to-face interviews conducted throughout the six counties of southwest Wisconsin. Surveys were developed (see Appendices A–E) that served as a format for the interviews and were structured for both consistency and flexibility based on the background of the individuals interviewed.

Interviews lasted between one and two hours. In total 75 interviews were conducted. Complete notes taken during the interviews provided the data for this research report.

PARTICIPANTS

Persons interviewed were selected based on several criteria:

- Individual roles in economic development.
- Understanding of processes and issues regarding regional economic development.
- A viable interest in the process.
- Willingness to respond to a variety of survey questions.

Individuals from five specific groups were identified and contacted regarding availability and willingness to be involved in a face-to-face interview process to share perspectives on economic development in southwest Wisconsin.

Economic Development Professionals

The group of economic development professionals who participated in this survey (see Appendix A) consisted of individuals from the public sector whose roles and responsibilities included some elements of area economic development. Their responsibilities ranged from professionals whose positions were based on total economic development accountability to those who had

some job obligations related to area economic development efforts. Various public supported positions included:

- Executive directors of county economic development corporations.
- Executive directors of local/municipal economic development corporations.
- University of Wisconsin staff with economic development responsibilities.
- Wisconsin Technical College staff with economic development responsibilities.
- University of Wisconsin Extension staff with economic development responsibilities.
- City managers with responsibilities related to economic development.
- Executive directors of chambers of commerce.
- Executive directors of business incubators.
- Executives responsible for entities such as Job Service and Workforce Development Boards in southwest Wisconsin.

Banking Executives

Interviews were conducted with management staff from financial institutions in each of the counties in southwest Wisconsin. These institutions ranged from locally owned and operated banks to financial institutions that were part of major banking corporations.

The survey questions used for this group of banking executives addressed issues related to funding economic development activities and supporting strategies to foster such growth. The survey itself (see Appendix B) was structured for both consistency and flexibility based on the background of the individuals interviewed.

All the banking executives interviewed were actively involved in economic development activities of the area. Such involvement included serving on local

and/or county economic development corporations, holding executive positions in these organizations, participating in chamber of commerce and service club activities related to economic development, and fostering an attitude of economic development support in a financial leadership role in the region.

Elected Officials

Elected officials at both the municipal and county levels of government were selected and represented all counties and major municipal areas of southwest Wisconsin. City managers, mayors, and county board chairs were interviewed using a survey with questions developed to secure information that related specifically to local government influence on economic development (see Appendices C and D).

Entrepreneurs

Individuals were selected from throughout the area of southwest Wisconsin who had experienced business success or failure. The survey questions (see Appendix E) for these face-to-face interviews attempted to identify reasons and conditions that could serve as a basis for effective business development and retention services.

COMMENTS IN GENERAL FROM INTERVIEWS

A number of common threads surfaced during the interviews regarding present strengths, recognized opportunities, and future directions. Though noted in several interviews, the following comments do not reflect total agreement among those who participated in the survey process.

PRESENT STRENGTHS

Participants interviewed acknowledged that economic development is, indeed, an important issue for the cities, villages, and rural areas of southwest Wisconsin. A general consensus existed regarding emphasis on and support for business retention throughout the area. Past efforts that met with success need to be commended and replicated.

- Maintain tourism activities.
- Highlight the advantages of rural/small town living.
- Support and encourage local business people and business enterprises.
- Celebrate the significant development that has occurred during the past 20–25 years in this region while supporting and expanding efforts to remain competitive.
- Continue present retention activities including the following: on-going contacts and communications; business, social, and information sessions; surveys for needs and satisfaction; recognition events for local businesses; government support and interest; and provision of appropriate infrastructure.
- Continue to involve the present array of economic development stakeholders including:
 - Economic Development Corporations
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Financial institutions
 - UW–Platteville

- Southwest Wisconsin Technical College
- Local/County/State Government

RECOGNIZED OPPORTUNITIES

Though economic development initiatives have met with some success in the past, the people interviewed recognized that change is essential. Efforts to improve economic development initiatives should increase the possibility of success in this time of intense competition.

- Do even more to support present business endeavors.
- Build the economic base on the viability and potential of the agricultural economy.
- Secure more financial support from the private sector for economic development activities.
- Connect tourism more directly with economic development activities.
- Recognize that the basis for economic development needs to be business prospects and develop ways to increase these contacts.
- Place more emphasis on homegrown business development and less on the traditional model of “chasing smoke stacks.”
- Combine economic development with community development including housing, education, infrastructure, and “smart growth” planning.
- Unify the significant variation in attitudes and approaches to economic development that exists in the area; that is, views of and support for growth efforts, cooperation and combination of efforts, and the meaning of economic development.
- Emphasize quality rather than quantity of jobs developed.
- Develop confidence in present aspects of the rural economy so that the influence of established businesses will no longer prevent development.
- Assist others to recognize that the most effective approach for business and industrial development has been proven to be a regional approach.

- Provide accurate, effective, practical, customer–friendly information that would efficiently assist entrepreneurs in business pursuits.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Forward thinking and future orientation were evident among the individuals interviewed. Persons expressed a willingness to share ideas and expertise to strengthen area–wide economic development initiatives.

- Analyze the assets of the region and build market elements based on those assets.
- Focus industrial and business development as part of a total regional plan for the needs and realities of the region.
- Redefine what economic development for the region is and develop specific measures of success.
- Bring all stakeholders in economic development along in these times of rapid change and competition.
- Develop a regional approach through identified goals, issues, and needs in order to become more politically involved with government at the state level and facilitate positive political contacts.
- Increase influence and clout on a regional basis of development while maintaining local identity and influence.
- Promote progressive thinking and support persons in the region who are willing to take risks for the sake of economic development.
- Develop a process through which both public and private sectors share the risks to support an entrepreneurial spirit in local communities.
- Work to reduce government requirements that are barriers to economic development at all governmental levels.
- Provide new business startups with a non–threatening point of entry; such support needs an outline of processes to follow, initial guidance, continued encouragement, and reality checks.

ENTREPRENEURS

Significant input was gained from entrepreneurs experiencing both lack of success and success in business ventures in the region of southwest Wisconsin. Their commentary can be a valuable assistance to future economic development initiatives.

LACK OF SUCCESS

The entrepreneurs in this group should not be viewed as failures, but as individuals willing to take risks who for various reasons experienced less than successful results. Progressive economic development entities can learn from these experiences and use them to create an economic environment that tends to prevent such occurrences.

Responses from the ten (10) individuals surveyed indicated for the most part disappointment that their efforts had not created the economic benefit envisioned. These potential entrepreneurs expressed varying reasons that their business ventures did not progress as planned, but most felt that the luxury of success or the burden of failure was the individual responsibility of the entrepreneur. All interviewees agreed that multiple reasons cause business ventures to fail.

The following are observations from these experiences that indicate differences between general expectations of entrepreneurs and the realities associated with starting a business:

- The unforeseen gap between the learning curve related to various aspects of a business and the demands for sufficient cash flow proved to be insurmountable.
 - Producing products or providing services
 - Financing an entire business cycle

- Marketing the business
 - Maintaining good customer and employee relations
- The need to work with public and private bureaucracies proved slow, confusing, and in some cases unwieldy.
- The entrepreneurs, in general, felt themselves to be fast moving, idea-driven people who did not foresee the obstacles that proved to be unmanageable.
- The confidence that entrepreneurs have with innovation and new ideas does not translate well to the reality of working with conservative lending institutions.
- Frustration builds when working with individuals providing assistance who think they know more about the business or process than the entrepreneur does.
- The lack of adequate funds to go through the business incubation period related to not adequately anticipating the income that the business would initially produce.
- Entrepreneurs lacked personal sophistication to deal with funding sources regarding business plans and overall financial management.
- The relative lack of understanding of the personal time commitment necessary to not only get the business started but also keep the business operational caused problems.
- Unforeseen conflicts within family situations occurred due to
 - Extensive time away from family.
 - Disagreement with use of family funds to support the business venture.
- Unforeseen conflicts within the community occurred due to
 - Ordinances and legal processes.
 - Lack of local citizen/customer support.
 - Perception of unfair local government competition (one case).
- The fear of failure and the unwillingness to admit problems within the business created a delay in seeking help in a timely manner.

- Concentration on the initial success of the business venture took time away from effectively tracking cash flow and inventory demands.
- Overall failure to continue the planning process caused problems to develop with no solutions in mind.
- Persons felt that business ventures in a rural area were more difficult due to the following realities:
 - Smaller market potential.
 - Limited support services.
 - Competition with urban markets.
 - Conservative lending institutions.
 - Lack of government sources for funding.

As these entrepreneurs reflected on their business ventures, general feelings of having had disappointing but exciting experiences were communicated. Many quality people shared their efforts, and a great deal was learned about success and failure from them.

Of those surveyed seven (7) felt another attempt would be made at a business startup. They hoped that their initial experiences would be beneficial to guarantee future success.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES

The following commentary was gleaned from established entrepreneurs in the six-county area of southwest Wisconsin. These individuals represented businesses that were well established and have been providing related services in the region for 6 to 50 years. Each of these enterprises represented viable economic impact on the communities and area served.

Generally speaking this group of interviewees felt that the region was fortunate to have three institutions of higher education to serve the education and training needs of business and industry. A viable feature for several of these entrepreneurs was the willingness of communities to develop tax incremental

finance (TIF) districts to support development. This program was a key factor in location, development, and expansion. All those interviewed felt the responsibility to be leaders in economic development activities and were involved in helping to create a business-friendly, attractive environment to promote business and industry growth.

Although it would be logical to characterize success in business ventures as factors opposite business failures, commentary from these interviewees indicated different perspectives regarding successful ventures. Common threads were woven throughout these observations. Commentary of these interviewees provided insights into the individual character traits and basic ingredients that contributed to success. Possibly these characteristics could provide a profile for persons interested in new business ventures. Such traits and actions are listed below:

- Displayed self initiative
- Characterized self-confidence
- Willing to take risks
- Able to accept failure
- Possessed management/organizational ability
- Had degree of common sense
- Could make decisions in timely manner
- Focused on needs and trends
- Could actualize business practices
- Able to consider options in development
- Connected financially
- Sought assistance at appropriate times
- Willing to be involved in community
- Viewed community growth as beneficial to all
- Generally had experienced more than one business venture in entrepreneurial careers

Finally, a more abstract phenomenon that each of these entrepreneurs indicated was that a degree of luck figured prominently in their overall business venture.

Two interesting comments were shared in conversations with this group:

- It was generally agreed that a more regional approach to economic development would benefit southwest Wisconsin. This approach would allow resource sharing and take advantage of a wider range of expertise to promote the region. A regional approach should bring together the agricultural community, the business/industrial sector, and tourism and market the area based on its natural attributes.
- Most of these entrepreneurs felt that little actual assistance was needed in the development process and tended not to seek help from the public sector. A strong vision, commitment, and planning process with appropriate initial research provided a substantial base for business success.

This group displayed strong independence and was cautious regarding types of financial assistance. In general the feeling was, “Stay away from public sources of assistance, it is not needed, and it is too slow, confusing, and cumbersome.”

REGIONAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

Respondents to the interview process considered the strengths and challenges experienced within the six-county region of southwest Wisconsin regarding economic development initiatives. Some of the items named are inherent to the process of economic development in any locale while others are products of the culture and geography of this region.

STRENGTHS

Positive strides have been and are being taken to further economic development initiatives in southwest Wisconsin. The people participating in the interview process generally agreed on the value of the following strengths:

- Availability of economic development professionals who are capable and dedicated to provide leadership to the region.
- Generally strong government support at the local, county, and state levels.
- Similarities among the six counties in the region could strengthen the concept of regional development.
- Availability of education and training services to meet business and industry needs.
- Strong work ethic and employee retention.
- Availability of industrial parks, spec buildings, and present level of development.
- Revolving loan funds available in many areas of the region.
- Local environments that are business friendly and supportive.
- Financial institutions that are involved and committed to assist development opportunities.
- Quality of life, including the natural beauty of the area, low crime rates, recreational opportunities, rural character and heritage, and convenient access to metropolitan areas.

CHALLENGES

In the consideration of factors that are barriers in the region regarding economic development, the following challenges were indicated:

- Impact of a limited population base.
 - Available work force.
 - Limited political influence.
- Lack of prospects for economic development.
- Lack of local investors to support local initiatives and potentials.
- Local resistance and jealousies regarding economic development initiatives.
- Competition not only from other states and regions of Wisconsin but also within the region of southwest Wisconsin.
- Lack of mutual recognition of the regional impact of collaborating to work with development prospects.
- Rural and more isolated image of the region as perceived by individuals not living in the region.
- Lack of marketing for the region related to both tourism and support for business/industrial development.
- Difficulty presented by the transition from a primarily agricultural-based economy to finding a new and appropriate economic fit for communities of the region.
- Lack of governmental initiatives to stimulate growth; that is, to take risks, investigate possibilities, pursue options, and allow time for development.
- Lack of regional leadership to assume responsibility for regional economic development initiatives.

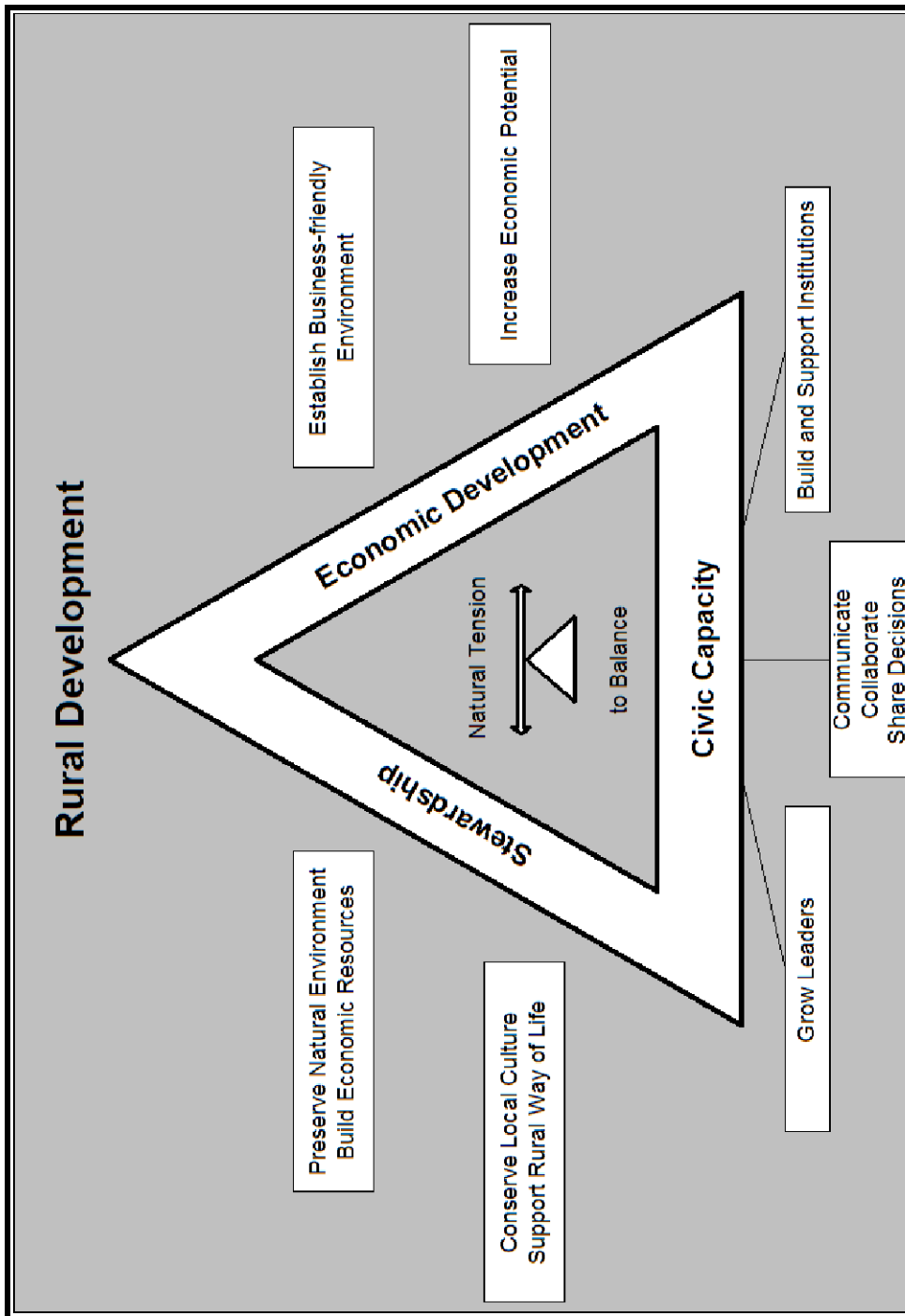
CHANGE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

All individuals interviewed stated that change and the acceptance of change were necessary components for viable economic development at both the local and regional levels. In the discussion of this concept, several factors emerged as significant guidelines to foster change in the region:

- View economic development as part of community development.
- Use local cultural values to envision local economic development and to shape its integration into the global economy.
- Create jobs that sustain the local culture and re-invest in the community.
- Consider new approaches to entrepreneurial education and training.
- Foster a climate of innovation to spark local solutions.
- Build civic capacity by growing leaders and encouraging collaborative decision-making.
- Mentor new generations of leaders.
- Develop partnerships to build a flexible regional workforce.
- Promote regional dialogues on economic development.
- Encourage coordinated planning at regional levels.
- Attract and retain young adults.
- Increase collaboration between local economic development organizations.
- Connect the relationship between economic growth and the education of the adult population.

SUMMARY

In an attempt to summarize the results of the input received during the interview process, a graphic presentation may best illustrate the process of and need for rural economic development. The following illustration attempts to bring together the professional insights of the variety of individuals surveyed and presents issues and concerns regarding economic development in the rural region of southwest Wisconsin.



GAP ANALYSIS

A major component of the project and a significant element in fostering economic growth in the region was the identification of existing gaps in

services that could assist business development and support entrepreneurs. This analysis could be used to address communication needs and organizational relationships among service providers and other economic development partners in the region.

Comments received during the interview process indicated perceptions and understandings of the development needs of the area and gaps that negatively affect progress. The following summarizes identified disparities between available support and recognized needs:

- A gap exists between assumptions and reality in regard to building a supportive entrepreneurial climate and an enabling infrastructure.
- A gap exists between development needs and a consistent, business-friendly local government in regard to tax structures, rules and regulations, and support systems.
- A gap exists between government responsibilities for economic development and local officials' understanding of the related needs, concepts, and practices.
- A gap exists between the financial needs of new and existing business and the engagement of local investors to fill this need.
- A gap exists between the need for alternative sources of funding to support development potential and the time and expertise of local economic development professionals to pursue opportunities.
- A gap exists in the reality of the economic diversity potential for the region and policy and funding priorities to support these new initiatives; e.g., the perception that the region of southwest Wisconsin lacks the resources and infrastructure for "high tech" development in both agriculture and industry.
- A gap exists in the reality of the needs regarding potential growth prospects and multiple sources of information and support causing duplication and confusion--need for single-source assistance.

- A gap exists related to activities supporting business growth and development and the activities of local and regional tourism--more communication and coordination between the participants is needed.
- A gap exists in cooperation between local chambers of commerce, municipal governments, and economic development organizations that may be caused by tendencies toward competition and self-interest.
- A gap or disconnect exists between education and the needs of the business world--leaders in the region need to work to bring together these entities to discuss relevant and practical means to meet education and training needs.
- A gap exists regarding the economic development potential of the region of southwest Wisconsin and the need to create a regional approach to development initiatives.

BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUPPORTIVE ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT

Through the data collection process of this study, best practices were identified from the interviews conducted and related research done at the state and national levels. The activities named in this section have proven successful in various locations throughout the country and give insights into potential opportunities to assist local and regional economic development in southwest Wisconsin.

SERVICE CORE OF RETIRED EXECUTIVES (SCORE)

Many successful examples exist of the impact on business development and retention through the availability of retired executives to provide assistance on a voluntary basis. The Service Core Of Retired Executives (SCORE) represents a forward structure of volunteers who are ready, willing, and able to provide consulting help to local businesses in need. These organizations

function throughout the United States and are characterized by specific organizational requirements and demands. SCORE chapters have proven very effective in areas of Wisconsin and have provided economic development expertise in areas of the state.

Recently a similar organization, a Volunteers to Business group, is developing in southwest Wisconsin. Although in the initial stages of development, this type of organization with the proper volunteer support could prove vital to the economic development of the region.

LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT TEAMS

Similar to SCORE, Local Business Support Teams are organizations made up of individuals in business at the local level. The intent of these support teams is to provide assistance to start-up businesses or to local businesses that face retention issues. Generally, the teams consist of five to ten members, each of whom is a successful local entrepreneur. Volunteers serving on these local teams are provided the training and education needed to meet the various demands and issues faced by the evolving business community.

When a need arises, one individual from the Local Business Support Team is appointed as the main contact person. Other team members provide assistance on an as-needed basis. Research indicated that the success of this team approach was based on the comprehensive expertise of team members and the commitment of each member to provide the time necessary for support services.

SIROLLI METHOD

Ernesto Sirolli has developed and practiced economic development methods that have succeeded in 250 communities in four countries. In his book *Ripples From the Zambezi*, Sirolli shared his vision, methods, and experiences. Although his business philosophy and concepts are open to

criticism, elements within his model can be effectively applied to any community or region to facilitate economic development and promote growth from within. His methods are people centered, and his basic goal is to help communities develop diverse and sustainable economies. One community in the region is using the methodology that Sirolli outlined in his book, although presently it has no affiliation with Sirolli or the Sirolli Institute.

ANGEL INVESTMENT GROUPS

Much emphasis today regarding economic development is placed on the concept of “growth from within.” Local and regional areas that are experiencing the most success with this concept are those that have local residents investing in local development. The underlying concept of Angel Investment Groups is the shared risk factor and the group ethic of interest in and support for local economic development.

These groups have generally assisted local entrepreneurs at stages of development where local financial institutions are not involved. Success of these groups at the local level are based on the definition of an accredited investor, the appropriate financial status of the individual, the individual and group commitment to take risks for local development, and the commitment of funding with appropriate control and assistance to the business.

SPECIALTY CLUBS FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Specialty clubs have proven to be an innovative approach to faster entrepreneurial development in various areas of the United States. Such clubs have been initiated and sponsored by a variety of organizations from both the public and private sector. The primary purpose of these specialty clubs is to bring together potential as well as established entrepreneurs for the sharing of experience, talents, motivations, finances, and other business development factors.

Wisconsin has a prime example of this approach to entrepreneurship in Monroe County. The Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club has proven successful in fostering relationships among manufacturers, marketers, and entrepreneurs to help foster business development and growth. This initiative is an attempt to develop a culture in a rural area that is supportive of diversified entrepreneurial activity. The club provides moral support for inventors and other persons who have moved into business development. Club activities are varied and geared to meet the needs of investors and entrepreneurs.

Club meetings feature guest speakers who share information and expertise to enlighten and encourage those in attendance. Topics at such gatherings might include past inventors, patent search, market research, prototypes, engineering, business plan development, avoiding scams, Web sites, international markets, venture capital resources, corporate law, and legislative updates and reports. Motivational speakers, people who have previously gone through the process of business development, urge participants not to quit when difficulties arise.

BUILDING BRANDS

Branding has developed as a marketing tool to sell commercial products and can also be used effectively to sell the economic development potential of a community or region. In the process of developing a brand to use as an economic development tool for a community or region, several factors need to be considered:

- The entrepreneurial spirit of the area.
- The economic and social values of the location.
- The heritage or cultural foundation of the region.
- The elements that are the attractions of the area.

A brand, simply put, is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a region, it delivers a pledge of support and satisfaction. A brand becomes a

collection of perceptions in the minds of individuals. These perceptions are the essence of a region and can be used effectively for economic development.

CLUSTERING

Clustering has proven to be an effective way to promote economic development in a region. The basic concept is to bring together similar businesses that can foster an area environment that includes mutual support, learning, efficiencies, synergies, and identification of economic needs. This approach has proven to be beneficial in creating area alliances and attracting similar businesses to a region. Brief descriptions of the two examples of clustering that are presently active in the area of southwest Wisconsin follow.

- Regional Dairy Modernization Task Force Initiative--The mission statement for this initiative is stated as follows:

Through long-term education efforts, the Dairy Modernization Task Force will, with partners, be a catalyst for the implementation of dairy modernization and/or other business development activities through the unleashing of producer's entrepreneurial and decision-making confidence gained through skills development and peer group networking.
- Southwest Wisconsin Arts Build--The project description and purpose are as follows:

Arts Build is an economic development project directed at southwest Wisconsin artists, artisans, and craftspeople interested in beginning or expanding their arts-related businesses. The aim is to increase the professional and business capacity of arts entrepreneurs through training, mentoring, counseling, and networking.

Opportunity exists in the region of southwest Wisconsin to build other types of clusters. This would be true not only for present businesses but could serve as an effort to attract new development for the area.

Southwest Wisconsin has been fairly traditional in its approach to economic development. These best practices serve only as suggestions for a few possibilities that could be applied at the local or regional levels.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today's economic development environment is one of severe competition and innovation. Growth appears to be the only vital factor that will sustain the viability of communities and regions. It is necessary, especially for a rural area, to position itself for growth and development. Southwest Wisconsin has done a good job in the past 25 years to sustain growth given the decline of the agricultural economy. The economic development professionals in the region have done a great job in helping the region monitor its economic viability. Further steps need to be taken to ensure the ability of the communities and region to continue to compete.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATION

The major recommendation from this study was supported throughout the interview process and was evident in the research related to economic development success--develop and support a regional economic development initiative for the six counties of southwest Wisconsin. Several factors need to be addressed related to this recommendation:

- Continue the work of and support for the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Economic Development Coalition and the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. These groups are dedicated professionals who have promoted regional development in an effective manner and serve as the key entities to carry out the related activities for regional promotion.
- Develop an umbrella group of “power brokers” in the region. This group should be individuals from the private and public sectors who can move people, make decisions, and have the social and political influence to stimulate action. These individuals should be dedicated to the region and the economic development of the area. A balance of membership from the private and public sectors is essential.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following additional recommendations would further strengthen economic development efforts:

- Establish regional involvement in the Location One Information System (LOIS).
- Investigate and decide on the value of joining the International Trade, Business and Economic Development Council (ITBEC).
- Work closely with Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning to identify alternative sources of funding and resource support for regional economic development.
- Utilize the resources of the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board in joint initiatives for economic development.
- Continue the development of the online Business Development Resource Guide for southwest Wisconsin and the linkage to the Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network.
- Develop and promote a Southwest Wisconsin Agricultural Summit. This summit could recognize and promote the economic opportunities of the agricultural base of the area. Highlights of the summit could include new and emerging technologies in the energy field relating to agriculture, new prospects for value-added agricultural products, and the importance of a viable agricultural economy.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY TOPICS
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

719 Pioneer Tower
Platteville, WI 53818

Resource Mapping Project

An inventory of regional resources available to businesses from private and public sources funded by a supplemental grant from the federal Economic Development Authority

Survey Topics--Economic Development Professionals

1. Entity
 - a. Full name
 - b. Principal contact person/s
 - c. Address
 - d. E-mail
 - e. URL/Web address
 - f. Phone
2. Public (government or non profit) or Private
3. Stated mission
4. Funding sources
5. Stakeholders
6. Geographic and/or economic service areas
7. Typical industries served
8. Typical products/services provided
9. Typical clients

10. Number of clients (Metric used to measure success)
11. Success stories
12. Challenges
13. Partners in collaboration (both public and private sectors)
14. To whom do you refer clients?
15. What is missing from economic growth in southwest Wisconsin?
16. Who are the leaders in economic development in your area?

APPENDIX B
SURVEY TOPICS
BANKING EXECUTIVES

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

719 Pioneer Tower
Platteville, WI 53818

Resource Mapping Project

An inventory of regional resources available to businesses from private and public sources funded by a supplemental grant from the federal Economic Development Authority

Survey Topics--Banking Executives

1. Entity
 - a. Full name
 - b. Principal contact person/s
 - c. Address
 - d. E-mail
 - e. URL/Web address
 - f. Phone
2. The role of the local bank in community economic development
3. Your personal role in economic development at the local level
4. Elements necessary for financial support of new or established businesses
5. Reasons for success in economic development, generally speaking
6. Elements in this community that promote economic development
7. Stakeholders--economic development locally
8. Economic service areas

9. Typical clients related to economic development
10. Success stories
11. Challenges
12. Partners in collaboration (both public and private sectors)
13. To whom do you refer clients?
14. What is missing from economic growth in southwest Wisconsin?
15. Who are the leaders in economic development in your area?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY TOPICS
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

719 Pioneer Tower
Platteville, WI 53818

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Survey Topics--Municipal Government

1. Entity
 - a. Full name
 - b. Principal contact person/s
 - c. Address
 - d. E-mail
 - e. URL/Web address
 - f. Phone
2. The role of the municipal government in promoting economic development
3. Specific efforts in municipal government that promote economic development
4. Elements in the municipality that tend to limit economic development
5. Primary resources that help economic development in the municipality: people, organizations, etc.

6. Who are the major stakeholders in economic development in your area?
7. Are the current approaches to economic development in the municipality working? Why? Why not?
8. Are there in your estimation any gaps in services to promote economic development?
9. Share examples of efforts that did not succeed in attracting a business or situations in which jobs were lost.
10. What are some of the municipal success stories in economic development?
11. What are the challenges you face?
12. Do you feel we should put more effort into smaller retail, commercial growth or put more resources to encourage larger business, industrial growth?
13. What would be one thing you would wish for that is presently lacking in municipal economic development?
14. Some advocate for trying to develop a more regional approach to provide resources for economic development. What do you see as the advantages or disadvantages with that idea?

APPENDIX D
SURVEY TOPICS
COUNTY BOARD CHAIRS

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

719 Pioneer Tower
Platteville, WI 53818

Resource Mapping Project

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Survey Topics--County Board Chairs

1. Entity
 - a. Full name
 - b. Principal contact person/s
 - c. Address
 - d. E-mail
 - e. URL/Web address
 - f. Phone
2. The role of the county boards in southwest Wisconsin to promote economic development
3. Efforts in county that promote economic development
4. Elements in county that tend to limit economic development
5. Primary resources that help economic development in the county: people, organizations, etc.
6. Who are the stakeholders in economic development in your area?
7. Are the current approaches to economic development in the county working? Why? Why not?

8. Are there in your estimation any gaps in services to promote economic development?
9. Share examples of efforts that did not succeed in attracting a business or situations in which jobs were lost.
10. What are some of the county success stories in economic development?
11. What are the challenges you face?
12. Do you feel we should put more effort into smaller retail, commercial growth or put more resources to encourage larger business, industrial growth?
13. What would be one thing you would wish for that is presently lacking in county economic development?
14. Some advocate for trying to develop a more regional approach to provide resources for economic development. What do you see as the advantages or disadvantages with that idea?

APPENDIX E
SURVEY TOPICS
ENTREPRENEURIAL SURVEY

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

719 Pioneer Tower
Platteville, WI 53818

Resource Mapping Project

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Survey Topics--Entrepreneurial Survey

1. Who do you see as the major service providers to assist business development in this area?
2. What is your opinion regarding the community response to support your business endeavors?
3. What does this community do or not do to provide a positive climate for business development?
4. Why did this particular business venture succeed/not succeed at this time and in this community?
5. What are some of the factors required for successful business development?
6. Were there any gaps in services provided to you either in start up or retention?
7. What information did you feel you needed as you approached the business development idea?

8. Was the municipal government supportive and helpful in your business venture?
9. Were there any services needed from state sources; and if so, were they effective and efficient?
10. Will you in the future attempt another business start-up in this community or another?

Appendix F

NAME	TITLE	ASSOCIATION
Anderson, Bev	Local Government Representative	Lafayette County Economic Development Corporation
Anna, Ayla		Small Business Development Center, UW-Platteville
Bartels, Gene	Chair	Grant County Board
Bickel, Beth	Director	Platteville/Benton Business Incubator
Boland, Francis	President	Community First Bank - Boscobel
Borremans, Robert	Executive Director	Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board
Brisbois, Ron	Director	Grant County Economic Development Corporation
Bruenig, Dave	Mayor	City of Darlington
Bullamore, Bruce	Executive Director	Richland County Economic Development
Cuchna, Sharon	Director	Prairie du Chien Chamber of Commerce
Cushman, Kathy	Executive Assistant	Grant County Economic Development Corporation
Daily, Thomas	Chair	Green County Board
Finley, Jim	President	Wisconsin Community Bank - Monroe
Fleming, Steve	Executive	First Banking Center - Darlington
Georgeson, Ronald	President	AMCOR Bank - Monroe
Gieske, Joy	Director	Mineral Point Chamber and Economic Development
Goldsmith, Jim	Community Resource Development Educator	Juneau County
Greenheck, Ann	Chair	Richland County Board
Ignatius, Ronald	Chairman of the Board, Founder	Quantum Devices, Inc.
Just, Bob	President	Mound City Bank - Platteville
Kackley, Jim	Consultant	Mineral Point Economic Development
Koch, Gary	City Clerk	City of Prairie du Chien
Kopp, Kathy	Director	Platteville chamber of Commerce
Kruel, Pam	Director	American Bank - Fennimore
Kruger, George	Director	Platteville Economic Development Corporation

Appendix F

NAME	TITLE	ASSOCIATION
Lee, Mike	Executive	First National Bank - Darlington
Leuck, Ellen	Director, CLT Consultant	SWTC Institutional Advancement
Leuck, Ellen	Director of Research and Development	Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, Customized Labor Training Grants
Lewis, Andy	Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development Educator	UW Extension, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Maciej-Heiner, Marian	Coordinator	UW-P Continuing Education
Mader, Cheryl	Mayor	City of Prairie du Chien
Martin, Doug	President	Livingston State Bank
McCauley, Jim	Mayor	Dodgeville
Morgan, Rick	Coordinator	UW-P Continuing Education
Mosena, Laura	Director of Business and Industrial Training Services	Black Hawk Technical College
Noble, Sue	Executive Assistant	Juneau County Economic Development Corporation
Nortman, Mark	Executive	Farmer's Saving Bank - Mineral Point
Ohlerogge, Paul	Community Resource Development Agent	Iowa County
Okey, Louis	Executive	Badger State Bank - Cassville
Olds, Vicky	Coordinator	SWTC Business and Industry Training Services
Otterstein, James	Executive Director	Rock County Economic Development Corporation
Palzkill, Bruce	District Director	Wisconsin Job Service
Parrish, Linda	Coordinator	Fennimore Economic Development
Pluckham, Tom	City Manager	City of Platteville
Ross, William	Mayor	City of Monroe
Runde, Chuck	President	First National Bank - Platteville
Saint, Ray	Executive Director	Boscobel Economic Development Corporation
Samstrom, Tim	President	Wells Fargo - Dodgeville
Schatz, Robert	Coordinator	UW-P Corporate Relations
Shramke, Anna	Director	Green County Economic Development Corporation

Appendix F

NAME	TITLE	ASSOCIATION
Simpson, Scott	City Manager	City of Lancaster
Successful Entrepreneur (1)		Green County
Successful Entrepreneur (1)		Iowa County
Successful Entrepreneur (1)		Lafayette County
Successful Entrepreneur (1)		Richland
Successful Entrepreneurs (2)		Grant County
Svennevig, Jane	Retired Vice President of Community Development	Black Hawk Technical College
Thares, Paul	Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development Educator	UW Extension, Grant County
Unsuccessful Entrepreneurs (2)		Grant County
Unsuccessful Entrepreneurs (2)		Green County
Unsuccessful Entrepreneurs (2)		Lafayette County
Unsuccessful Entrepreneurs (2)		Richland County
Unsuccessful Entrepreneurs (2)		Iowa County
Wehrle, Jerry	Mayor	City of Lancaster
Wentela, Mike	Director	Lafayette County Economic Development Corporation
Wetter, Steve	Mayor	City of Boscobel
Whipple, Terry	Executive Director	Juneau County Economic Development Corporation
Whitish, Lisa	Executive Assistant	SWTC Business and Industry Training Services