

Subject: CFED Regional outreach effort – July 15 - Montpelier

Commission on the Future of Economic Development

(www.snellingcenter.org/cfed)

Developing a 5-year strategic plan for economic development for the state.

Time and Format

We are hosting two afternoon sessions as focused conversations as well as an evening public meeting. The role of commissioners is to be observers and listeners.

Noon - 2:00 - Lunch and a focused facilitated conversation with area employers

2:30- 4:30pm - A facilitated group session with key service groups and stakeholders whose mission is focused on economic development, jobs, economic opportunity, and the basic community infrastructure that supports a healthy economy and community.

5:30 – 7:30pm – Public Meeting

Montpelier Sessions – On the Vermont College for the Fine Arts campus, College Hall

Invited Participants:

Noon Meeting: Employers

Burr	Morse	Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks
Mark	Nicholson	Nicom Coatings
Kevin	Lord	EF Wall
John	Wall	Wall Goldfinger
Michael	Belenky	Zutano
Andrew	Brewer	Onion River Sports
Josh	Fitzhugh	Union Mutual
Richard	Wiswall	Cate Farm
Mark	Gherardi	Buttura & Gherardi
Win	Smith	Sugarbush Resort
Ed	Townley	Cabot Creamery Cooperative Green Mountain Coffee Roasters
Don	Mayer	Small Dog Electronics
Bill	Parker	Creative Microsystems
Sue	Sinclair	Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
George	Malek	Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce
Nancy	Zorn	Green Mountain United Way
Hal	Cohen	Central Vermont Community Action
Sue	Kruthers	Central Vermont Medical Center
Susan	Klein	Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce
Phil	Susman	Norwich University
Carol	Leech	Vocation Rehab

John	Fairbanks	VHFA
Janet	Bullard	Vermont Commission on Women
Eric	Peterson	Central Vermont Workforce Investment Board
Traven	Leyshon	VT State Labor Council AFL-CIO - President
Denis	Labounty	VT State Labor Council AFL-CIO
Deborah	Lisi-Baker	Vermont Center for Independent Living
Avram	Patt	Washington Electric Cooperative
Neil	Meier	Union Institute & University
Dave	Rubel	Small Business Development Center - CVT

Local Assistance from: Sam Matthews, Executive Vice President, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation.

There is a **web site set up for each region** and we will continue to populate it with information and links as they become available. Following each day we will add several ways that people from each region can continue to provide input.

<http://www.snellingcenter.org/cfed/July15Montpelier/>

The structure of each day is still as we discussed and is outlined below. I have added the structure of each part of the day at the end to give you a feel for the facilitated sessions. Over lunch, you will be guests to listen to the conversation of local businesses and employers; the next session with the regional stakeholders you will be participants; in the evening we will ask each of you to act as greeter and engage folks around questions on the economic future that will be posted at displays around the entry to the evening program. And then we will have you sit commission style to have more traditional testimony. We have asked one of you to act as moderator for the day, and in that role we will ask you to welcome people, introduce other commissioners, acknowledge our local collaborators, and in the evening, host the hearing session.

All sessions will be held at the campus of Vermont College of the Fine Arts (formerly Union Institute and University) in College Hall in the Chapel.

The structure of the day

We have purposefully chosen a public outreach structure and strategy based on a successful model that the Snelling Center built with the joint legislative committees on health care in 2005 to run a process for the legislature to provide statewide input into the health care reform debate of the time. The reports on that process are still on the Legislature's web site:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/Public%20Engagement%20Forums/PUBEngDates.htm>

Based on the very positive reception this received from the legislature and stakeholders statewide we believe that the format has real merit in CFED's work to gather more information and input as it is mandated to and as it needs to in order to develop a firmer base for its future work.

This is a sound process to appropriately engage broader publics in the work of the commission in a manner that leads to a base for good deliberations. It is important to keep in mind that public engagement, public participation and public input should not be equated to what happens at a

single hearing or day of meetings. Just as CFED has a long term assignment to deliberate, review, monitor and advise, the "public part of the process is also ongoing. The public gets to learn, deliberate and continue to add input along the way. There will be designed "events" that allow for focused gathering of that input and deliberation.

What we have designed is a piece of the bigger process. No more. The 12 days of engagement are not the whole picture. We plan to continue to build the tools, including information resources, as permanent education and response tools for the Commission. We think they will have value for the regions and for the general public as this long term conversation moves forward.

DRAFT OF THE FACILITATED SESSIONS

PART I: Employers and regional business owners 12-2:00 (starting with lunch)

Goal: to gather information and feedback critical in the development of a strategic statewide economic development plan that reflects the experiences of 6 distinct regions of Vermont

Objectives:

- Identify assets available through the community, region and state to support/bolster economic development
- Determine key issues and challenges facing communities and employers to inform understanding of the health of the region and state
- Identify innovative approaches to economic development that are already underway in the various regions of Vermont
- Consider strategic investments and priorities

Method: Focused conversation/meeting with employers/businesses (2 hrs)

Key Questions

Q1: Would you say that your business and prospects are growing or shrinking?

- What factors are influencing your projections for the future?
- Which of these factors are specific to this region or state?

Q2: Let's spend some time talking about the **positive aspects** of operating a business in this region:

- What are some of the competitive **advantages** you feel you have by operating in this region and state? What gives you an edge?
- What local, state and other **supports** are available to you and have assisted you as an employer and in the start up/growth/maintenance of your business?
- What innovative approaches exist for business support and development in this region? What is happening here that may not be happening elsewhere?

Q3: Now we can talk about some of the **challenges**; what are some of the key challenges you face in operating a business in this region and in Vermont?

- Q4:** What (additional) **infrastructure** do you think is necessary to support economic development in the region?
- Q5:** Given the experience of your existing business, what **state policies** would you say most notably help or hinder economic development in the region?
- Q6:** What concerns, if any, do you have about **future stability** and/or growth? Please be specific about your recommendations for addressing these concerns.
- Q7:** What areas, business sectors or specific businesses, do you foresee for **future growth** in this region? What's the next economic engine?
- Q8:** Given all we have discussed today, what would you like to **highlight** for consideration by local and state policy makers in order for your business and community to thrive in the future?
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PART II - Stakeholders 2:30-4:30

Goal: to gather information and feedback critical in the development of a strategic statewide economic development plan that reflects the experiences of 6 distinct regions of Vermont

Objectives:

- Identify assets available through the community, region and state to support/bolster economic development
- Determine key issues and challenges facing communities and employers
- Identify innovative approaches to economic development that are already underway in the various regions of Vermont
- Consider strategic investments and priorities

Method: Facilitated meeting with economic development stakeholders (2 hrs); the format will vary according to size of the group; if 12 or less then hold as a discussion whereas a larger group may require break out groups. Questions will be identified that could be handled in break out groups without compromising the group thinking and interaction.

- Q1. What would you say are some of the **distinguishing features** of this region?
- In what ways would you say these features affect (+ or -) economic vitality and opportunity?
- Q2. Which sectors of the regional economy are **growing** and which are **declining**?
- Areas of growth? (chart this) Areas of decline? (chart this)
 - What are your predictions for the future—10 years out? What early indicators are there of newly emerging sectors?
- Q3. What's working now in **supporting** or fostering economic stability and development in this region? Please be specific.
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- Are there any particularly **effective or innovative initiatives** you can point to that support businesses and development that you think should be continued?
 - Are there any which you think might be replicated in other parts of the state?
- Q4. What (additional) **infrastructure** do you think is necessary to support economic development in the region.
- Q5. What **public policies** most notably help or hinder economic development in the region?
- What components currently work well and should be retained and reinforced?
 - What components pose challenges or hinder economic development and will need to be addressed to ensure a vibrant economy in the future?
- Q6. Closing statement: Given the need to be **strategic**, where do you think investments, policies, etc. should be focused and why?
- If you had \$10 where would you put it? Leaving exercise
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PART III - Open Public Meeting 5:30 - 7:30p

Goal: To gather information and feedback critical in the development of a strategic statewide economic development plan that reflects the experiences of 6 distinct regions of Vermont

Objectives:

- Provide a venue for a wider public to address some of the questions and issues raised in the previous conversations and to bring attention to these for broader ongoing discussion regionally. Tools to continue to have input to CFED will be provided and the website will be populated with several opportunities for gathering additional input especially from those unable to attend.

Method: Open forum for the public to interface with Commission members (2 hours)

- Participants gather information and respond to key questions at kiosks (30 mins)
 - 3 stations with key information and specific questions to guide interaction and responses by direct conversations, written cards, and posted flip chart.
 - Some regional partners may have an information station to support their local CEDS process
 - Commissioners staff kiosks related to key components of economic plan
- Brief presentation by CFED (10-15 mins.)
- Open mike comments + Q&A (75-90 mins.)
- Possible interactive exercise

Key Questions for Kiosks

Concerns about Future: (Post definition of economic development or CFED vision)

- What concerns do you have about future stability and/or growth for our regional economy?
- What specific recommendations do you have for addressing these concerns?

Future opportunities: (Post list and definition of potential business sectors for future development: creative economy, green economy, etc.)

- What opportunities do you foresee for future growth?
 - In which sectors or businesses do you think your region might experience growth?
 - What opportunities do you foresee for future jobs and opportunity for you and your children?
 - If you considered starting a business in the future, what might it be?

Vermont's Public policies and programs: (Post existing list of policies—see discussion guide probes)

- Which public policies are currently working well to support job creation and economic development? Which should we keep and reinforce?
 - Which public policies seem to be working against job creation and economic development?
 - What has been your experience with the variety of programs that VT offers to individuals and businesses to support job creation and employment?
 - Are there any particular programs or services which you think should be supported as they truly make a difference in supporting workers, creating jobs and keeping the local economy healthy?
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