

## **REGIONAL PROSPERITY INITIATIVE (RPI) Highlights**

*Note: the following brief highlights are intended to make it easier to report back to your organization on what's happening with the RPI Collaborative. We understand that minutes can be rather dry reading and thought we'd make your day a little easier. Thanks for being part of this exciting effort to coordinate economic development efforts across our region!*

- **Taste the Local Difference** is a local food marketing agency. TLD supports local farmers, connecting them with local restaurants and consumers. Activities include local food events, restaurant-farmer connections and promotions. Quick Fact: Certified local food event program created over \$100,000 spent on local food ingredients in first 18 months.
- **Talent Update** – there was good participation from local schools in talent tours to discover possibilities for jobs and higher education. However, no local schools applied to the Michigan College Access Network program. There will be effort to understand better how to get higher post-secondary completion rates. Quick Fact: RPI mini-grants assisted in building talent tour participation rates.
- **RPI Process** – For 2018, more meetings will take place at locations of interest to regional economic development, sharing information on local successes. Quick Fact: Priorities for the RPI in 2018 are 1. Infrastructure (broadband) 2. Talent Retention, 3. Business Growth, 4. Mini-grant program, 5. Placemaking.

## **MINUTES**

### **REGION 3: RPI COLLABORATIVE**

**November 30, 2017**

**University Center**

**Gaylord, MI**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Doug Baum at 1:00pm..

**Members Present:** Brenda Bachelder, Lisa McComb, Dana McGrew, Steve Schnell, Tom Stephenson, Erich Podjaske, Marisue Moreau, Audra Leininger, Rosalie Myers, Diane Rekowski, Michelle Andrews, Rina Bethany, Hannah Sanderson, Doug Paulus, Molly Stepanski, Natasha Allen, Doug Baum, Karen Godi, David Emmel

Ex-officio: Lydia Murray –MEDC, Donna LaCourt – MDARD, Patty O'Donnell- MDOT. Call-in: Sara Wycoff-McCauley, Janie McNabb.

Others: Tricia Phelps, TLD

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** R. Myers moved, seconded by M. Moreau to approve the minutes as presented. Ayes all, motion carried.

**Financial Review:** D. Rekowski reported that due to NEMCOG's Accounting merging with NE MI Consortium/MI Works! and the inputting of year-end financial data per project into the new system, a report for November was not yet available.

**Presentation:** *Taste the Local Difference: Tricia Phelps, CEO and Molly Stepanski: Region 3: TLD Coordinator.*

Tricia Phelps and Molly Stepanski provided an overview on the accomplishments of the TLD

work by Molly Stepanski in Region 3. 55,000 free guides were distributed in 100+ locations in 11 NE counties. This guide serves to connect suppliers/business to local farmers/producers that want to source locally. Paid Partnerships went from 2 Farms and Farmer Markets and 3 Specialty Producers in 2016 to 18 Farms & Farmers markets, 7 Restaurants, 5 Breweries & Wineries, 11 Retailers, 6 Specialty Producers in 2017. 2018 numbers will likely double from 2017. In the first 18 months there was over \$100,000 spent on local food ingredients for the TLD certified local food event program.

Tricia Phelps then discussed TLD's sustainability plan to continue to provide services to build a Regional Local Foods System for health and business/agriculture production and innovation. The TLD magazine is distributed state-wide and the ads provide revenue as well as co-branding partnerships and certified events. It is expected that RPI funding of TLD will decrease to approximately \$5000 as of 2020.

**Talent Update:** S. Wycoff-McCauley provided an update on the following:

*Talent Tours: Janie McNabb updated the Collaborative on Talent Tours. Manufacturing Day: Region 3 had 98 students participate and 13 businesses from the NE Consortium and 7B had 68 students and 2 tours/businesses. Mini grants that were provided to schools played an important role in school participation. This acted as catalyst to create more talent tours. There will be a tour conducted in Roscommon. She continues to work with the videographer to deliver a promotional video of talent tours that showcases manufacturing and STEM activities in the region. The videographer had a difficult time being at all of the events as they occurred and is continuing to film and edit footage. Janie is working with both Michigan Works! Agencies to ensure that it will be a valuable resource as we prepare the region's young people for in-demand careers.*

*MCAN (RPI College Exploration Task): Sara Wycoff-McCauley informed the Collaborative there were no applications from high schools in Region 3 for the MCAN grants. Initially, Houghton Lake and Gaylord schools had both indicated a desire to apply for the AdviseMI grants/counselors. This was very encouraging as both schools were on MCAN's target list and believed to be very competitive. However, Houghton Lake did not realize that they would need to provide any match funds and backed out over the costs. Gaylord's Superintendent questioned whether Gaylord met the eligibility requirement (specifically as it relates to financially disadvantaged students) and called MCAN to confirm. Initially, the Gaylord principal indicated they did not receive a response, though in further conversations with MCAN, that appears not to be the case. MCAN claims to have returned the call with a voicemail and never heard back. Even so, the schools were offered an extension to complete and submit an application and chose to pass.*

*This was a disheartening outcome due to the region's underrepresentation with this program. It may in part be due to the short notice of the grant application. A number of collaborative members expressed the need to better map or demonstrate how college credits, AP courses and dual enrollment impact post-secondary education options for students as part of this broader effort.*

*MCAN Innovation Grant: Sara McCauley has been working with MCAN representatives and our local Michigan Works! Agencies to craft an MCAN innovation grant, per the board's direction. The collaborative has indicated a desire to know more about the talent landscape in the region, specifically what is compelling and what is preventing students*

*from pursuing a post-secondary education. The grant application will offer one scholarship for one college-going (used in the broadest sense) student in each county in the region, using the scholarship application as a proxy for a survey and gathering information from students through that mechanism. We anticipate submitting the grant in late December or early January. Following submission, the group will need to work on developing the talent survey that best reflects the data points the collaborative wants to gather.*

**Community/Economic Development Update:** D. Rekowski informed the Collaborative that Steve Schnell is the Coordinator for the Regional Prosperity Collaborative and will be completing the Place Plan and Trail Signage for the City of Grayling. It was mentioned that County Road Commission representation could also benefit the RPI process.

### **Membership Review & Meetings:**

Steve Schnell asked the group to review the list of members and provide input on the geographic and organizational distribution of members. He also mentioned that there seemed to be interest in keeping consistent monthly meeting dates and times. Also, there has been an interest in having some meetings at different locations to tour facilities.

It was determined that the fourth Wednesday of every month would work the best for the RPI with a networking lunch at noon and meeting beginning at 1pm. Every other month would be at the University Center in Gaylord and other months would be in the field visiting a facility of interest to the RPI. The executive committee will provide a list of suggested locations for the year as well as ideas as to how to help provide information to other agencies to build interest in attending RPI meetings. It may help to know from each member how they find the RPI to be helpful in what they do.

**Other Business:** M. Moreau moved, seconded by E. Podjaske to approve the prioritization of RPI goals as presented in the budget. They are: 1. Infrastructure (including broadband) 2. Talent Retention, 3. Business Growth, 4. Mini-grant program, 5. Placemaking.

**Public Comment:** No public Comment

**Updates:** Members provided updates for their service area.

- Lisa McComb is trying to find more SCORE (previously known as Service Corps of Retired Executives) volunteers for the area.
- MDARD grants are available and are due January 16<sup>th</sup>
- Lumber grading classes will occur 5/15-5/27
- There will be a logger's forum on 3/27/18

**Next meeting Date:** January 24, 2018 at 1pm with networking lunch at noon.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.