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CEDS Planning & Performance Evaluation Process

The CEDS Committee/SWAMC Board of Directors met on August 21-23, 2009 in a strategic planning retreat to review both economic issues within the region and the performance of the organization. This session was a continuation of twenty years of economic development planning efforts for the region, monthly board meetings throughout the past planning cycle, and other planning sessions, conferences and workshops that have identified and explored regional issues.

Participants

Kara Sandvik, Wells Fargo Bank; Alice Ruby, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation; Trevor Brown, Kodiak Chamber of Commerce; Glen Gardner, City of Sand Point; Joe Sullivan, Mundt MacGregor; Ernest Weiss, City of King Cove; Louise Stutes, Kodiak Island Borough; Terry Haines, City of Kodiak; Shirley Marquardt, City of Unalaska. Michael Catsi, SWAMC Executive Director; Andy Varner, SWAMC Economic Development Specialist; Brett Welcher, SWAMC Planning VISTA; and Kathryn Abbott, SWAMC Special Projects VISTA. Participants in spirit: Lamar Cotten, Lake & Peninsula Borough.

CEDS Planning Process

As context is always important to enable a group to stay on task, Michael Catsi provided an overview of the CEDS process and timeline. A discussion with the full group ensued about:

- The value of the CEDS document,
- The value of conducting the CEDS development process, and
- Recommendations to improve the CEDS process.

Following this discussion, SWAMC's Planning VISTA, Brett Welcher, gave a presentation to the group regarding progress made, changes for the new CEDS, and work to be done.

2010 CEDS Process

As a starting point, the committee reviewed the 2003 CEDS document and subsequent updates. SWAMC staff then described efforts to collect information from the region:

- Discussions with other economic development organizations, managers and staff from boroughs, cities, and communities
- Reviewed local community reports
 - Staff found that the information from the region was in inconsistent formats, and that different information was compiled in different locales.
 - Staff sifted through reports from communities to find commonalities.
 - Issued multiple calls for capital projects and cross-prioritization within sub-regions. This information is desired from funding agencies, but there's resistance from region due to concerns about projects being downgraded or ignored by funders

As the CEDS Committee, the SWAMC Board of Directors gave approval of the work done so far, and it was recommended that we revisit the issue after the Annual Membership Meeting in February 2010. After more discussion in the early part of the year, the CEDS Committee recommended action to:

- Post document on SWAMC website for 30 day stakeholder comment period before sending along for Federal approval.
- Finalize and send to U.S. Economic Development Agency (EDA) and DCCED
- CEDS Document will also be used to work more effectively with the:
 - Economic Development Administration

- Alaska Department of Community & Economic Development
- Denali Commission and other agencies

Recommendations to improve the CEDS process

- Assist communities to use more standardized format and information collection
- Work to overcome or work around confidentiality issues for data from state and federal agencies
- Add in a component at the annual meeting regarding CEDS
 - Its value to the region
 - Provide information about what EDA and others (e.g., Denali Commission) are looking for, such as cross-prioritization of capital projects and why this is going to be increasingly important for the Region.
- Ensure that the CEDS compliments local/village plans and projects
 - SWAMC strives to do this by creating a CEDS document that is broad [not every project needs to be in a plan (per conversations with EDA). EDA checks in with SWAMC to see if the project is consistent with the broader Regional CEDS. SWAMC identifies how projects align with the CEDS and issues a letter of support].
- Perhaps SWAMC should consider what fish issues exist where there are no inherent conflicts that exist and build on that. (Been talked about for a number of years)

SWAMC's Purpose and Value

The Board last had a strategic planning retreat in February 2007, and they reviewed SWAMC's Mission and Vision. The Board found these two statements consistent with SWAMC's current and future efforts.

SWAMC's Mission

The Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference is a regional membership organization that advances the collective interests of Southwest Alaska people, business and communities.

SWAMC's Vision

SWAMC helps promote economic opportunities to improve the quality of life and influence long term responsible development.

Performance Evaluation

The CEDS Committee/SWAMC Board of Directors views performance evaluation as an essential part of the CEDS planning and development process. Such an evaluation provides an opportunity to determine the efficacy of the plan, identify mid-course adjustments, and otherwise refine and focus ongoing implementation efforts throughout the planning cycle.

During the strategic planning retreat, the Board determined that the CEDS should be distributed widely throughout the region via the SWAMC website and newsletter. This will provide an opportunity for direct feedback from municipalities and other members in the region. The CEDS is viewed as a living document and feedback is important to give the effort meaning. Further, it is an opportunity to assess initial implementation of the action plan.

EDA has several performance measures which guide their investments in EDDs. With the updated CEDS, SWAMC strived to meet the desired outcomes of these measures. However, as with most issues in rural Alaska, it is often exceedingly difficult to meet measurements sent down from Washington DC. Many of the measures pigeonhole efforts and cannot truly reflect economic opportunities in Alaska. SWAMC will continue to advocate for more appropriate development measures in rural Alaska.

EDAs performance measures are:

- Number of jobs created after implementation of CEDS
- Number and types of investments undertaken in the region
- Number of jobs retained in the region
- Amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS, and
- Changes in the economic environment in the region.

In addition to its Performance Measures, EDA has several Action Plan objectives that they like to see in CEDS documents, and staff and Board

tried to reach these. The objectives that directly pertain to SWAMC's CEDS Action Plan include:

- Promotes economic development
- Fosters transportation access
- Enhances and protects the environment
- Promotes the use of technology in economic development, including access to high-speed telecommunications
- Balances resources through sound management of physical development, and
- Obtains and utilizes adequate funds and other resources

At the end of each program year, SWAMC staff will prepare an assessment of each goal, objective and strategy in the action plan. This process is consistent with the performance evaluation requirements of the EDA, which includes:

- the extent to which the annual work plan is consistent with identified CEDS goals
- the extent to which the annual work plan is consistent with the CEDS objections
- the extent to which the organization is meeting the performance measures specified in the annual work plan.

In addition to these EDA requirements, SWAMC has reviewed performance evaluation measures used by other EDDs and will use the following measures as indicators of performance:

- Quality of the Regional CEDS
 - Usefulness of the economic analysis
 - Appropriateness of Vision Statement
 - Relevance of the goals to the economic situation and community conditions
 - Completion of the annual work plan
- Extent of participation by government, business, and community leaders
 - Board of Directors meeting attendance
 - Establishment of effective committee structure
 - District Communication and dissemination of information
- Number of EDA grants award based on CEDS strategy
- Hours of non-EDA-funded staff/volunteer activity in CEDS process

These measurements will be reported in the annual report to the EDA along with the required assessments.