

## Section 5.0: Implementation and Performance Measures



## **5.0 Implementation and Performance Measures**

As stated in the Introduction, the CEDS is intended to be comprehensive, participatory, and effective, which means not only should it identify elements necessary for economic development in the region, but it should also identify the means available for implementing planned initiatives and for measuring the success of the plan. Implementing a comprehensive plan requires a similarly comprehensive approach, therefore, the CEDS includes information from a variety of sources- not simply those available through the Economic Development Administration, although these are an important resource. The CEDS should be closely allied with the comprehensive range of economic development activities of the EDD Planning Organization (NACOLG) and should be introduced and distributed to agencies as well. By promoting the CEDS in the full range of activities undertaken by the Planning Organization and interacting with public and private partners for implementation and performance review, NACOLG strengthens the role of the CEDS and the EDD behind a consolidated, comprehensive system of prioritization for economic development.

Also, the CEDS includes suggestions for monitoring the success of implementation efforts by including recommendations for follow-up activities designed to increase regional understanding of which projects are, or may develop as, priorities. Additionally, a key characteristic of the CEDS implementation recommendations is increased communication between economic developers throughout the region, including communication between stakeholders for individual projects as well as communication regarding regional development activities and successes.

**Throughout the CEDS process there was widespread recognition that community development- that is, the development of sustainable policies for how communities will grow and expand in the physical environment, are integral to economic development; and also community development proceeds alongside and interdependently with economic development so that any attempt to artificially separate community development programs from the economic development context, or vice versa, would be detrimental to both.**

### **5.1 Implementation**

Implementation of the CEDS will require a variety of resources and commitments from multi-jurisdictional sources. The tools for implementation are disbursed widely among local, regional, state, and federal entities, each possessing different areas of expertise, resources, and capacity for specific projects. The following section provides an overview of the tools available for implementing the CEDS and offers recommendations for utilizing these tools with respect to many of the objectives and strategies contained in the plan.

#### **5.1.1 Local Implementation Techniques**

Effective implementation begins and ends in local communities. Identifying and capitalizing upon local community capacity is therefore necessary to economic development. Positive and negative externalities affect development opportunities—for example, changes in fiscal policy leading to greater competition for grants or increased international labor competition damaging heretofore stable industries. These events establish a framework of challenges and opportunities, however, it is local activity that overcomes or succumbs to these



## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy • 2007-2008 •

---

---

challenges. Outside assistance may come; or it may not. But with consistent commitment to a community-driven development program, communities are more likely to help themselves and, not coincidentally, are more likely to demonstrate the resolve and efficacy necessary for outside recognition. To a large extent, successful economic development requires an understanding of the tools, or assets, available for implementation, which begin locally with connections among individuals having shared goals and priorities and then grow to encompass others in a network that connects various capacities to an effective, motivated and mobilized local constituency.

### Community Planning

One of the most powerful tools available to local communities for implementing the Economic Vision of the CEDS is an active community planning process. Counties and cities in Northwest Alabama often overlook the connection between planning and economic development. On the one hand, there is economic development, which is a comprehensive project with a number of interrelated parts—land use, transportation, infrastructure and facilities, as well as factors such as population growth and retention, which affects available workforce. On the other hand is the process by which communities come to conclusions about how to prioritize and fairly allocate resources for community and economic development. In its simplest form, community planning can be divided into two parts—deliberation toward a decision and the implementation of that decision. Also overlooked is the fact that, despite the need for governmental involvement for the use of certain regulatory tools, community planning can take on a variety of forms and be led by any of a variety of local agencies, such as local civic groups, chambers of commerce, industrial development agencies, or private enterprises. As the name implies, the only necessary components of *community planning* are a forward-looking approach and an involved, active, and participatory community-driven process. For economic development these two elements must combine to first prioritize and decide upon initiatives and then to utilize their resources to make desired changes.

When effectively utilized, community planning offers an opportunity to identify local priorities and to activate and mobilize a constituency to begin implementing these priorities. The CEDS process incorporated these principles in the development of its planning framework. By refining the goals, objectives and strategies contained in the CEDS, community planning can greatly aid the implementation of the CEDS, producing initiatives—often regional initiatives—with broad-based, multi-jurisdictional support. Once decided upon, the community planning process provides a number of means for local communities to implement policy initiatives. Policies such as subdivision regulations and capital facilities planning, which are available to both counties and municipalities in Alabama, can affect the economic development environment by ensuring sustainable, fiscally and environmentally responsible development practices that accord with the Economic Vision, as well as the local community's vision for growth and development. Similarly, the use of zoning in a municipal setting can affect the economic development environment by ensuring that investments made in the community are being made in stable, sustainable communities and districts. Finally, an often overlooked implementation benefit that results from community planning is the ability to identify and target stakeholders, volunteers, and local organizations and residents who are willing and capable of helping to improve the investment and development climate in the local community. Identifying, nurturing and developing this community can lead to sustained activity in a variety of areas, from litter control to crime prevention, that promote economic and community development.

### **5.1.2 Implementation Techniques Available to the Planning Organization**

---

---



A number of regional planning initiatives were identified and discussed as part of the background for the CEDS plan. These agencies and organizations possess resources and capacities that can be utilized to effectively implement economic development projects. The Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments is involved in many of these activities and will continue to endorse CEDS planning priorities in the agency's interactions through these forums. In this way, the agencies activities and network of contacts and partners will be leveraged to implement the goals, objectives, and strategies produced of the comprehensive economic plan.

Continuing agency implementation activities take on a variety of forms. Foremost, the agency possesses expertise available to assist local governments identifying local capacity and developing networks among and between local actors and between local and regional, state, and federal actors. NACOLG is heavily involved in workforce development as a coordinator for WIA Region I and a participant in WIRED program development. NACOLG staff is also involved in the development and implementation of policies through the Rural Action Commission. The Government Services Department offers assistance identifying and completing grant applications for a variety of programs, including Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Economic Development Administration (EDA), as well as Transportation Enhancement Grants, in conjunction with the Transportation Planning Department. Additionally, NACOLG and the Government Services Department administer and operate the Revolving Loan Fund, which makes gap financing available to spur private investments. The Community and Regional Planning Department offers services and technical assistance for community planning and the development of programs for public involvement and implementation through both public and private resources. Finally, the Transportation Planning Department offers planning services through the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Rural Planning Organization. Each of these activities will carry forward the CEDS plan by endorsing and designing program elements to meet the identified needs of the region.

### **5.1.3 Measuring CEDS Performance- Stakeholders and Contacts, Activity**

The CEDS is a comprehensive plan and as such focuses on planning priorities that extend from short range to long range. The performance of the CEDS as a regional economic development plan depends on the capacity of local-level actors, agencies and individuals, to identify those priorities with the greatest potential to accomplish economic development goals and to continually work toward refining and implementing those goals. Therefore, the measures of performance for the CEDS must incorporate mechanisms designed to maintain momentum and activity for each priority and strategy contained in the plan.

As detailed in Section 4.0, each strategy included in the CEDS plan contains a planning horizon that identifies the desired timeframe for implementation, a list of stakeholders and contacts (currently incomplete) and an activity summary. As time passes and the plan matures, strategies will be updated and performance will be measured based on these criteria. Although many projects have been ongoing, with the updated 2007-2008 CEDS every project will begin with a clean slate for the purposes of measuring implementation. Starting in 2007-2008, each strategy will be tied to community stakeholders and contacts, which will be contacted regularly. Those for which no stakeholders or contacts are identified will be evaluated closely with the next update to the CEDS, which will take place no more than 2 years hence. Level of activity will be measured qualitatively by the level of overall interest in the strategy and the concrete results (funding, cooperation, construction, etc.) of that



## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy • 2007-2008 •

---

---

activity. Activity measures will be identified and refined, with those strategies unable to develop measurable outcomes (i.e. remaining too vague) or unable to meet targets being re-evaluated. Projects with longer planning horizons will be allowed more time to meet objectives.

### 5.2 Implementation and Performance Recommendations

The changes in the CEDS process described above will require several changes in the way the document has been approached. The following recommendations for changes to the CEDS are vital to the success of the plan:

- Establish the CEDS process as a *continuous planning process* designed to maintain communication between the local, regional, state and federal actors involved in economic development.
- Establish the CEDS Committee as a standing sub-committee of the NACOLG/Economic Development District Board.
  - Maintain an active CEDS Committee membership composed of public and private representatives, as required by EDA.
  - Conduct regular (at minimum bi-annual) meetings to report and discuss CEDS priorities.
  - Provide regular (at minimum bi-monthly) updates to the NACOLG/EDD Board regarding the status and activity of CEDS priorities.
- Implement a regional economic development newsletter for distribution to NACOLG/EDD Board members, CEDS Committee members, development partners, and other interested parties.
- Identify stakeholders and contacts for individual CEDS strategies and, where possible, larger development objectives, as defined in the CEDS.
  - Conduct regular interviews with development contacts to determine what, if any, activity has occurred and to ensure local support and resources are available for implementation.
  - Develop, in conjunction with the CEDS Committee, a system for prioritizing strategies based upon the involvement of stakeholders and local contact- to include a mechanism for de-emphasizing dormant strategies and, eventually, removing these from the CEDS.
- Complete annual performance updates for each strategy and objective included in the CEDS. Updates may be more frequent as activity requires.
- Update and expand the content of the CEDS as new data become available. Present an updated CEDS for approval on at least an annual basis.

These recommendations are intended to provide a means of maintaining the CEDS as a central economic development tool for the region by ensuring that the planning priorities included in the plan retain lasting

---

---



**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**  
**• 2007-2008 •**

---

---

importance, momentum, and activity. Because it is comprehensive and variable in terms of planning timeline, the CEDS planning process risks losing much of its usefulness to economic development as a result of stated priorities becoming dormant and stale. Likewise, there is a need to maintain and develop a mechanism to account for changes in the development environment that might lead to a need for update and amendment. These recommendations are intended to implement a comprehensive economic planning process that is forceful, effective, and responsive.



