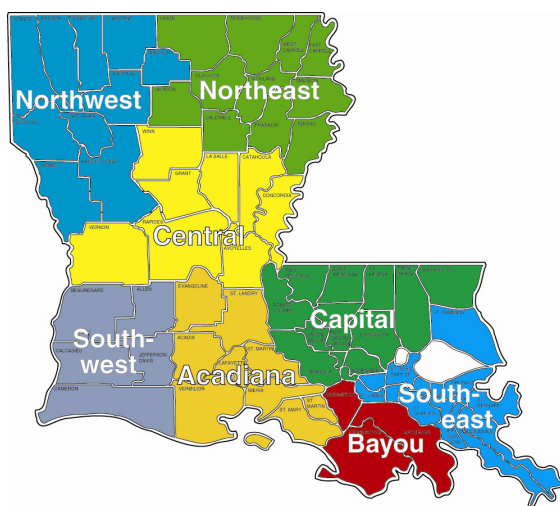




A Comprehensive Strategy for Community Development in Louisiana

"Phase I: Identifying Tools for Success"

Phase I Report



May 2007



Project Purpose Statement

In accordance with Louisiana's Vision 2020, the purpose of this project is to create a Best Practices Template for Community Development together with Component Programs that will serve to customize the approach that each community might take to achieve a community with physical, human, social, financial, and environmental assets that enable the economic prosperity for all of a community's citizens.

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• Survey Questions	
• Complete Survey Results	
• Working Group PowerPoint Presentations	

Forward and Acknowledgements

Becoming competitive and differentiated in today's global economy is the primary goal of economic development organizations. The foundation of this effort is community development in which the product (i.e. town, city, region, parish) is prepared and made a marketable place to live, recreate, and do business. This marketing effort is both an internal and external process. People that live in communities have perceptions about their place called home. As you know, perceptions equal reality. People from outside a place also have perceptions and so the cycle goes.

We have been truly amazed at the dedication and patience of the generous people of Louisiana that have been involved in bringing the project to this point. The process of community development is one of consensus building and takes a lot of time. Even though this is widely known, few places have the true spirit needed for consensus building – consensus building is alive and well in the State of Louisiana.

Perhaps this is because of the challenges Louisiana has been faced in the near past and perhaps it is because of the State's great desire to be economically successful. Louisiana is a multi-faceted place of many personalities and offerings to its current and prospective citizens.

Louisiana Vision 2020 Action Plan's Item 20 is a grassroots effort to address perceptions and realities of the state related to community development. This first phase of the Comprehensive Plan for Community Development in Louisiana is a significant first step towards this achievement. One of the primary goals is to create a plan that will be endorsed by many internal and external stakeholders. At some point in this process, these stakeholders will be asked to formally endorse this effort. It is our hope that stakeholders will see the value of the methodology and results of this work and all will give their resounding support to the vision and the plan's implementation.

We would like to express our appreciation as well as appreciation on behalf of the State of Louisiana's Department of Economic Development and CH2M HILL, Inc., to all participants that have given so generously of their time and talent. Close to 1,500 people have been involved in this first phase, through answering the survey and participating in focus groups around the state, they have been the heart of this work. Special thanks go to the **Steering Committee and Working Group** that assisted us throughout the process in prioritizing issues and suggested solutions, reviewing drafts, giving thoughtful and knowledgeable insight into their regions, and many other ways of contribution:

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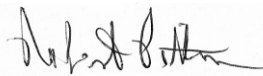
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Elton Pody	Central LA Chamber
Heather Poole	Louisiana Board of Regents
Pat Regan	OECD
Heather Reggio	LA Retirement Dev. Com
Brenda Reine	St Tammany EDF
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Chip Rogers	LED NW Regional Rep
Miriam Russell	LED NE Regioanl Rep
Ryan Seal	Washington Parish ED
Rebecca Shirley	LIDEA President, LED Reg. Dir.
Skip Smart*	LED, COS
James Smith	Town of Rayville
Linda Sparks	Sabine Tourism Commission
Steve Sparks	Baton Rouge Area Chamber
Buddy Spillers	Ouachita ED Corporation
Karen St. Cyr	Baton Rouge Port
George Swift	SW LA Partnership
Mike Taylor	USDA RD
Scott Terry	Ruston/Lincoln Chamber
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Lacey Toledano	St. Tammany West Chamber
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Rick Ward*	Association of LA Electric Coops
Pat Witty*	LED, COS
Karen Yates*	Entergy

* Indicates person is both a Steering Committee and a Working Group Member

Acknowledgement and appreciation go out to Marilyn Cantwell, Jack Vincent, David Dodd, and Ivan Miestchovich, for their excellent facilitation of the focus groups throughout the state. We would like to express our deep appreciation to LED's Executive Management and specifically Skip Smart and Pat Witty, for their ever vigilant support of this process, terrific project management and ability to be flexible in the needs of this project. It has been an honor to work with all of these citizens of Louisiana on accomplishing this phase of the process.



Jennifer M. Tanner
Sr. Project Manager, CH2M HILL, Inc.



Robert Pittman
Sr. Project Manager, CH2M HILL, Inc.

Endorsements

We the undersigned, after review of the contents of this Phase I Report outlining the work completed towards the creation of a Comprehensive Plan for Community Development in the State of Louisiana, do hereby endorse this effort and pledge to support it within our ability.

<i>Signature</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Organization</i>
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Introduction

Louisiana Vision 2020 Action Plan 2006 addresses Restoration and Capacity Building, particularly Rural and Community Development. Action Item 20 calls for the development of a comprehensive strategy for rural and community development. In order to accomplish this action item the following goals were identified:

1. Create a working group that includes representatives of the Governor's Office, Louisiana Economic Development, other appropriate state agencies the LSU AgCenter, Southern University Ag Center and regional economic development practitioners, representatives of rural areas and small communities.
2. Identify promising practices in rural and community development as well as structures to facilitate implementation.
3. Identify components that need to be addressed in Louisiana's strategic plan for rural and community development.
4. Assess regional economic development strategies and how they can support rural areas.
5. Develop a scope of work, determine funding needs, and identify possible sources of funds.

Addressing the Goal Areas

In order to address these goal areas, Louisiana Economic Development (LED) contracted with CH2M HILL to lead a team and facilitate a process to discover the issues and needs for community development in the state and begin to identify a collection of tools needed to enable a statewide community development program. This effort has been led by a Steering Committee and working group of community and economic development professionals and volunteers from across the state. CH2M HILL was asked to perform the following tasks:

Preparation and Facilitation of First Phase in the Planning Process to bring the whole Working Group together to:

1. Receive background information and training on community development and leadership
2. Identify existing Community Development Programs in Louisiana and discuss their effectiveness
3. Breakout into Focus Groups based on geographic regions to discuss their own goals for this process

4. Go through a Visioning process for Community Development for the State of Louisiana.

Develop, execute and initially analyze a statewide community development survey to discover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and strengths of community development currently in Louisiana from an internal viewpoint.

Develop and analyze statewide focus groups that would gather thought on root causes of liabilities and ideas to leverage assets and solutions or tools needed to develop a vibrant and customizable community development program in Louisiana.

Preparation of recommendations for the continuing development of a statewide Community Development Program in Louisiana that would include recommendations for tools needed and a facilitated meeting with the working group to begin discussions on how to implement such a program.

Parameters of Study

In order to have a balanced approach to the strategic planning process, the following parameters need to be considered throughout the process:

- Traditional Urban vs. Rural Economies
- Regional Differences
- Communities affected by hurricane devastation and those that have not been affected.
- Community Size
- Military - BRAC

Critical Success Factors

From the beginning, endorsement by a by broad-based group of stakeholders has been recognized as essential to the success of this effort. These stakeholders include internal and external entities including:

- Utilities: AEP, CLECO, Entergy, ALEC
- Louisiana Municipal Association, Police Jury Association
- Louisiana Economic Development Council
- Universities and Community Colleges
- Site Selection and Economic Development Consulting Organizations
- Private Companies
- Others as identified

Goals/Measures of Success

The overarching litmus test of success for this effort will be the acceptance and implementation by many communities throughout Louisiana.

With the completion of this report, which is referred to as Phase I, the team will have accomplished the first three goals of the Vision 2020 Action Item 20.

Phase I Report

This report is divided into six sections:

Recommendations: Compiles recommendations based on findings in the survey, focus groups and working group meetings for tools that should be included in the toolkit

Project Methodology: Overview of the methodology that was designed by the consultant team in collaboration with the Steering Committee.

Synopsis of the First Working Group Meeting: Summary of the working group's definition of personality styles of their regions, statewide resources and existing community development programs, issues that need to be addressed in a community development program, and initial visioning work

Summary of the Statewide Survey and Complete Results: The summary gives the highlights of a statewide survey that gauged assets and liabilities at the community, parish, and state level. Complete results are included in the Appendix.

Results of Statewide Focus Group Meetings: Compilation of statewide focus group results that identify root causes and suggest solutions to most commonly identified liabilities and assets from survey.

Synopsis of the Second Working Group Meeting: Summary of the working group's prioritization of tools/solutions needed for the toolkit going forward.

Appendix: Complete Survey Questionnaire and Results; Working Group Meeting Agendas; Working Group and Focus Group PowerPoint Presentations

Recommended Tools for Toolkit

Statewide Tools/Resources Needed

Based on the state-wide survey, the focus groups, input from the working group and CH2M HILL's professional opinion, below is a list of community and economic development tools and resources that should be included in a "toolkit" for community development. This is a prioritized list of the desires of the Louisiana stakeholders involved in this project.

#1. Communication Tools

Databases:

- Funding Sources
- State & Regional Community Development Resources
- State & Regional Economic Development Resources
- Best Practices
- Statewide Community Development Network
- Marketing & Communications Program
- Repository for Web-based Training Tools

#2. Training Tools

Statewide available tools should include:

- Online Training Modules
 - Scheduled Webinars
 - In-person Training
- Items/Topics to include:
- Community Assessment Tool and Training Manual/Resource Guide
 - Visioning, Strategic Planning and Implementation Templates & Guide
 - Marketing Your Community Training/Resource Guide
 - Business Retention/Expansion Resource Guide
 - New Business Start up and Entrepreneurship
 - Emergency Preparedness Resource Guide
 - Developing Community Level Incentive Programs
 - Lean Community Guide
 - Land Use Planning & Smart Growth Guide
 - Leadership & Ethics
 - Community & Economic Development Training
 - Grant writing

#3. Certification Program

- Leveled
 - Basic
 - Lean - Technology - Innovation
 - Emergency Preparedness
- Structure & Operations
- Criteria
- Manual and Training Materials
- Incentives
- Research Center
- Marketing

#4. State Legislative Lobbyist/Lobbying Task Force on Community & Economic Development

- Educating
- Public Relations
- Legislative Agenda positioning state for success

#5. State Level Taskforces:

- Workforce Development
- University – Community College as a CED Asset
- Education
- Elected Official Training
- Incentives/Business Climate
- Lean & Technology/Innovation Center of Excellence
- Emergency Preparedness

Project Methodology

The approach to this project was to involve many people in the process and work towards consensus. A Steering Committee, made up of seven individuals (identified by an * in the list from the Foreward and Acknowledgement section) was given the task of providing input, review, and leadership guidance to the project from beginning to end. The Working Group is a select group of publicly and privately employed individuals involved in community development initiatives throughout the state. The Working Group is a "representative" group that helps the core project team refine information and prioritize ideas.

At the outset of the project, the Steering Committee believed that the mission of the project team was to discover best practices on the creation of a template process that all communities could utilize to: 1) assess where their community is in terms of the assets it has in place, 2) develop a plan to fulfill a community's vision for its future, and 3) organize a program toolkit that will assist communities in executing their plan. We initially planned to gather this information through a couple of working group meetings, interviews, and a best practices analysis. After the first Working Group meeting it became very apparent to the Steering Committee that we needed to step back and gain much more fundamental information about grassroots input about issues, assets and liabilities in the state that stakeholders wanted to see addressed. We could not do a best practice analysis either at this juncture in the project because we had not identified the issues to be addressed. Best practices for identified tools will be tackled in Phase II of this project.

In order to accomplish this information gathering, the Steering Committee decided to adjust the scope of work and instructed CH2M HILL to conduct a statewide survey focusing on issues, assets and liabilities; focus groups to process the survey information for solutions; and then to wrap up this first phase of work with another working group meeting. These changes to the scope significantly impacted the schedule of the Phase I work but ultimately has produced far more reliable and applicable information driven by tried and true data gathering and consensus building techniques.

The project methodology follows and summarizes the thought and steps the team took in order to build consensus and ultimately plan the next phase of this project toward the creation of a Comprehensive Plan for Community Development in Louisiana. Ultimately, the tools created will allow each community in Louisiana to customize the approach to community development that works best for them.

Initial Alignment Meeting (May 2006):

The consulting team met together with the Steering/Executive Committee and discussed the project parameters, timing, communication, and other items so that all parties had a clear understanding of the major issues relative to a successful

outcome of this planning process. The primary goal was to gain consensus on what the goals, objectives and final deliverables were for the process. A project charter was developed that served as a guiding and living document to “charter” the project throughout its life. The project charter was revised after the 1st Working Group meeting to reflect the change in scope for the process. All information contained in the project charter is included in the Introduction section of this report.

First Working Group Meeting (June 2006)

The objective of this meeting of the Working Group was for the participants to;

1. receive background information and training on community development and leadership
2. receive appropriate status reports from Louisiana Economic Development
3. identify existing Community Development Programs in Louisiana and discuss their effectiveness
4. breakout into Focus Groups based on geographic regions to discuss their own goals for this process
5. go through a Visioning process for Community Development for the State of Louisiana.

A summary document of the results of this meeting was prepared and submitted for comment to Steering Committee and then finalized and sent to the Working Groups. It is also part of this report (see Summary of 1st Working Group Meeting).

Statewide Stakeholder Survey (October thru December 2006)

In order to understand the issues affecting community and economic development in Louisiana, a statewide on-line opinion survey of local leaders was conducted. The survey gathered opinions on community and economic development factors at the community, parish, regional and state levels. Invitations went out to about 1,450 people the last few months of 2006 and January 2007, with 389 responding for a 27.1% response rate. This is a very high response rate for surveys of this type. Care was taken to solicit survey responses in all eight LED geographic regions across the state.

The views and opinions obtained in this survey constitute a statistically significant sampling of state-wide opinion. Thus, the data is an accurate gauge of the sentiments and opinions of development officials and community leaders in the state of Louisiana.

Additional methodology details include:

- To select the survey recipients, input was sought from the states eight planning districts, chambers of commerce, LED Regional Directors, local and regional economic development organizations and some local elected officials.
- Two survey beta tests were completed prior to launching the entire survey process to ensure that the survey was clear and easily completed. One beta test was completed with the Working Group and another was completed with a group of specially selected individuals based upon their known involvement in community development

- One region was surveyed at a time, consecutively, to ensure participation and input by all regions in the state and to monitor progress and ensure accurate communication links. The most difficult part of this process was getting a correct email address for invitees, particularly in rural communities.
- The complete survey questionnaire and all results are included in the Appendix.

Statewide Focus Groups (February 2007)

Eight focus groups with a total of 87 participants were conducted, in February 2007, in the following locations statewide:

- Acadiana Region @ Lafayette
- Bayou/Orleans/River Parishes @ Thibodaux
- E. Florida Parishes @ Hammond
- W. Florida Parishes @ Baton Rouge
- Central Louisiana @ Pineville
- Northwest Louisiana @ Minden
- Northwest Louisiana @ Natchitoches
- Northeast Louisiana @ Monroe

The focus group participants identified themselves as willing to participate during the statewide survey process summarized in the previous section. An additional group that acted as a "beta-test" group was conducted at the LED offices in Baton Rouge in January and consisted of about 20 people from the Baton Rouge area and LED personnel. The beta group assisted in working out any rough spots in the process so that the statewide groups would go as smoothly as possible.

In all eight focus groups, the participants came together in the beginning for introductions and background information disseminated by a facilitator. All focus groups received exactly the same information through a PowerPoint Presentation (found in the Appendix). The participants then separated into one of three breakout sessions of their own choosing based upon the topics being discussed. Each breakout session discussed three topic areas for about an hour. Two liabilities and one asset, identified from the survey, were covered so that at the end of the breakout time all participants came back together and had nine topics to discuss as a large group. As a group, the participants received a report from a leader of each breakout session covering their three topics and a discussion ensued to add any additional ideas that might be developed.

The focus group participants were encouraged to focus on root causes and solutions for liabilities and continued leveraging and solutions for assets. Further discussion and rehashing of issues was discouraged by facilitators as the survey covered this in detail.

Second Working Group Meeting (March 2006)

The objective of the second meeting was to bring the Working Group together again to assist in prioritizing the tools identified by the participants in the survey and focus groups. During the morning session, the agenda consisted of the following:

- Retracing our Steps/Background
- Presentation of the Methodology used in the survey and focus groups
- Overview of the results of the Survey
- Overview of the results of the Focus Group Meetings

In the afternoon, the group separated into three breakout groups in order to prioritize the solutions offered up by focus group participants. These results are summarized in the Summary of the 2nd Working Group meeting.

Next Steps

This report completes Phase I of the project to develop a “Comprehensive Plan for Community Development.” The Recommendations section of this report summarizes the tools that need to be developed in Phase II of the project in order to complete and implement the plan. It is vital to the success of this project for the momentum built to continue forward so that the project as whole does not lose ground.

Initial Working Group Meeting

Synopsis

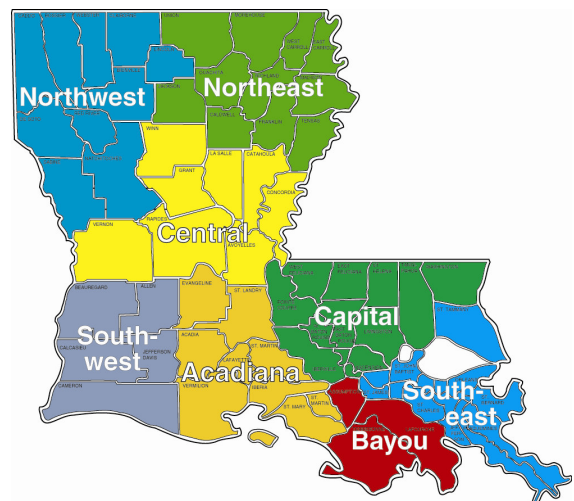
The objective of the first meeting was to bring the whole Working Group together for the first time to ensure that everyone started from common ground. During this meeting, the participants:

1. Received background information and training on community development and leadership
2. Received appropriate status reports from Louisiana Economic Development especially related to project activity
3. Broke into Focus Groups based on geographic regions to discuss goals for the process
4. Began to identify existing Community Development Programs and Resources in Louisiana - Discussed their effectiveness
5. Reviewed the Project Charter that serves as a “living document” to guide this project. The Project Charter is subject to change and the Steering Committee will maintain the most current version.

The breakout sessions dominated the last half of the 1st meeting and discussions were held by the Working Group separated by region on the following topics:

- Unique personality features of the individual regions and current issues
- Barriers and impediments to Community Development (CD)
- Identification of existing programs and resources that will assist in CD
- Desired outcomes for this process
- Beginning thoughts on a vision statement for this process

The following graphic defines the regions in Louisiana. A section summarizing the results of the first meeting and its breakout groups for each region in Louisiana follows the graphic.



Eight Regional Planning Districts in Louisiana

Bayou Region

Personality

- Entrepreneurial Spirit
- Innovative Risk Takers (27% Patents)
- Cultural Diversity (good and bad)

Issues

- Lack of Community Champions
- Lack of governmental vision
- Lack of Leadership
- Environmental Concerns
- Lack of Infrastructure
- Lack of IT Network
- Recognition as point of delivery

Identified Resources

SLEC
USDA
HUD
LHFA
LSU-Extension Service
NSU
CDI
Main Street Program
LED
South Central Planning

LA 1 Coalition
Restore Retreat
Habitat for Humanity
Ministerial Alliance
Faith-Based Orgs.
Community Action Agency
Garden Clubs
Art & Cultural Guilds
Senior Citizens Orgs.
Historical Preservation

Desired Outcome

- Strengthening of regional identity, greater cooperation and external partnerships.

Vision Statement

- To develop individual communities that will collaborate with neighboring communities to strengthen the Bayou Region's position as a viable candidate for business prospects.

Northeast Region

Unique Community Personality & Issues

Common for State:

- Poverty
- Lack of educated workforce
- Lack of trained workers
- Lack of quality jobs
- Loss of investment base
- Strong sense of place
- Lack of housing
- Lack/pockets of poor work ethics
- Lack/cost of healthcare
- Crime/drug abuse
- Need for Community leadership
- Elected officials (state, local, parish) untrained for position/apathy
- Lack (perceived or real) of ethics
- Rural – outflow of prosperity
- Wealthy invest outside of the state
- Lack of connectivity
- Need to change welfare program – more pressure/accountability of recipients
- Reform of educational programs
- 60 communities – large geographic area
- Great cooperation in our communities with only one or two exceptions

Regional:

- Communities w/ “no reason” to exist (formed historically serving a need/reason that no longer exists)
- Potable water (Sparta Aquifer) – studied to death
- Division of classes
- Pre-problematic unions
- HIGH COST OF Healthcare
- HIGH Utility Costs
- Tremendous community pride
- Lack of jobs
- Crime/drugs
- Education
- Housing

Barriers/Impediments to Community Development

- Disparity in planning – lack of cultural/age/race diversity
- Lack of understanding of ED process
- Lack of regional cooperation
- Failure to invest in selves
- Declining population/tax base
- “Delta” brand – failure to pick-up like Mississippi/TN has done
- Lack of registered voters/population base
- Failure/Need to grow resources
- No Flooding
- Lack of leadership skills & techniques – in some ways – too much community pride

Identity of Existing State & Local Community Development Resources

State Education	LED
State Universities	CDBG
State Community Colleges	USDA - RD

Foundations
LSU Ag. Ext. Service
Dept of Labor
WIB Boards
LHFA
Churches
Homeland Security
DRA
ECD (Ent Corp Delta)
SBDC
HUD

DOTD
Council on Aging
Red Cross
United Way
Wellspring
Local Businesses
CLECO
SWEPCO
Assoc. of Electric Co-ops
LA Rural Development Council

Desired outcome of this process:

- Education of a Skilled Workforce – start within one year w/ measurable results – pilot programs
- Build a product that we as ED sell
- Thriving economy
- Classrooms of under 20 students with certified teachers
- Identify priorities
- Reduced duplication of programs
- More overall coordination of CD/ED activities
- Toolbox to work from
- Recipe to develop targeted programs from
 - w/training modules
 - Example communities
 - Roadmaps to get to our communities' targeted goals
 - Method for funding & distribution of funds
 - Guidebook of ED Resources
 - Best practices from other communities

Vision Statement:

Northeast LA will be the location anyone would want to live, work, and play.

Southeast Region

Unique Community Personality:

- Cultural diversity ("melting pot")
- International type destination - Crossover
- Logistical advantage for transportation – Cruise Lines
- Artistic "Hot Bed" – Talent Drain
- Universities/Colleges
- Medical – BioMed/Tech - Crossover
- Changing demographic – Inflow of Hispanic culture
- Industry
- Metro New Orleans is only one part of this region
- Impacted by storm

Barriers & Impediments

- Qualifier = Post Storm
- Pre-Storm and Post Storm – Education
- Housing
- Lack of Workforce
- Money – Lack of-for gov. and people – for rebuilding of homes, businesses, and infrastructure
- Debris removal
- Education
- Levees – repair, rebuild, improve
- Lack of low end workers

Existing Community Development Resources

National grants (Public and Private
Orgs)

Universities (National & Local)

Volunteers & Service Orgs

State – LRA

Legislation

GO Act – Incentives

State Incentives

Chambers, Business Orgs

EDOs

Utility companies

Desired Outcomes

- Community Development “Toolkit” or Template
- Easily Implemented with solutions that are politically acceptable
- Identification of resources – people, money “+” to implement the models, suggestions
- Input tool – process that solicits, requests input data
- Detailed plan for development of the entire state.

Vision Statement

Thinking points :

- Economically stronger
- Stronger vibrant communities
- Better educated citizens/workers

“Creating community development models that position LA communities to become better places to live, work, and do business.”

Acadiana

Unique Community Personality & Issues

- Progressive; innovative
- Lack of leadership
- Entrepreneurial
- Community and Political divisiveness
- Labor Availability
- Cajun culture; heritage
- Location
- Lack of skilled labor
- “brain drain”
- Poor infrastructure

Barriers & Impediments to Community Development

- Inefficient Infrastructure – Roads
- High cost of Housing ; lack of affordable housing
- Limited land with infrastructure for ED
- Declining CDBG/HOME Entitlement funds
- Achieving buy-in from all relevant parties
- Regionality – seeing the big picture
- Lack of vision/planning
- Community Appearance

Desired Outcome of this Process:

- Single source/access point for info/referral/resources
- Website resources which allow a community to extract info. on available programs/resources based upon population size.
- How to tie in all parties – answer “What's in it for me?”
- Networking – learning how others have accomplished their goals
- Learning the players-who to bring to the table

Acadiana Vision Statement

State-wide program to enhance basic community development education/training at the local level, including a web based community development toolkit with principles, best practices, policies, and resources to enhance community development and to eliminate barriers/impediments to economic development and tailored to community size – small, mid-sized, large. Also need a state community assessment program (SWOT) with small incentive, to raise community consciousness about community development & economic development issues. And, finally, to use community development programs, projects, and policies to enhance arts, culture, and tourism

Central Louisiana

Unique Community Personality & Issues

- Diverse melting pot (urban/emerging urban, national forest, delta, Toledo Bend)
- Geographic location – Central
- Politically challenged by way districts drawn – barriers
- Military
- Transportation system being discovered (intermodal crossroads/hub)
- Natural benefits/natural resources: unique biological/ecological structure – rechargeable aquifers.
- Frost line – removed from coastal area but still accessible
- Under utilized and semi-trained
- Drug problem with labor force

Barriers & Impediments

- Politically challenged by districts drawn – different than set region – pros & cons
- Better communication to bridge distances creating a network
- We need a community development network as strong as ED network
- Labor – lack of availability – LCTCS (need their report to be aggressive and responsive) not in same book to address more jobs than people with skills to fit – work ethic in some areas – we need career assessments of workforce – start with all high school graduates
- Education system K-12 and Adult Ed – dropouts – keep kids in school with neg./pos. incentives
- Basic infrastructure – i.e. all water districts need connectivity

Resources

CLECO
Rapides Foundation CD Works
Kisatchie Delta
Entergy (for this region but high for State)
England EIDC
Central Chamber and Small Chambers
Urban Hospitals
Rural Hospitals (outreach, clinics, etc.)
LBTC Mobile Classroom – Opportunity
SBDCs
LSUA
Walmart, Target, etc.
CLBI
Tunica Biloxi – Venture Capital
Orchard

CABL
LSU Ag Center
Funding:
Rapides Foundation
USDA Rural Dev. & Comm. Facilities
LCDBG
EDA
FAA
HUD (Rural Housing and ED Initiative)
DoTD
LFFA
Faith-based Orgs
Federal programs
FIRE
HS (Federal)
Electric & Telephone Co-Ops in this region
Endowment for Humanities

Rec. Trails
Land, water, conservation

LED (regional basis) – improving
statewide

Vision

Cooperative region, flexible enough to meet changing needs of communities and motivated to action.

Northwest Region

Unique Personality

- Distinct culture segments
- Geographical splits
- Workforce/Work Ethic
- Pessimism
- Branding
- Potable water issues
- Small parish population with two universities with total enrollment that equals over half the parish population
- Lack of “quality of life opportunities” for a large percentage of the total population....lack of local investment in these opportunities

Barriers

- Race – racial tensions
- Organization of various partnerships
- Individual personalities “wear feelings on shirt sleeve” – “protect their turf”
- Restrictive state regulations
- Blight – no code
- Lack of commitment – from both leaders and citizens
- Lack of Local Vision/Planning – with clear measurable goals
- Parish Gov’t & City Gov’t Relationships
- Lack of Community-wide buy-in
- Territorialism
- Inadequate funding
- “Really important – not certain the community wants growth and development”

Vision

Recognizing the unique/diverse qualities of Louisiana, create catalysts that engage, energize, and equip community leadership and residents to develop their communities as viable quality places for people to live and work

Capital Region

Uniqueness & Issues

- Rural and Urban Combinations – rural is dependent on the Capital Area
- Higher Education – over 70,000 students
- Possibility of large tracts of land for scale development
- Mississippi River and its tributaries and distributaries
- Culture
- Concentration of research centers
- Close proximity to state gov't
- Mill town, decreasing population
- Universities, state capital, arts, research of LSU & Pennington, good shopping and wide variety of shopping opportunities

Barriers

- Limited vision and leadership from Metro Council, BREC
- Primary focus of chamber is on large industry
- "sub-regions" within the "region"
- Lack of input of all community stakeholders
- Education – lack of positives promoted – negative media
- Fragmented and sporadic knowledge of resources
- Susceptible to disaster
- Housing (comprehensive)
- Lack of public transportation
- Drainage
- Regional effort is opposed
- Uncontrolled development and traffic
- Income, race, education

Resources

LA Housing Finance Agency
Community Foundations
SBDCs
Utility companies
Good Corporate Citizens
International Relief Organizations
USDA
Gr. Baton Rouge Chamber
Capital Region Planning Commission.

Desired outcomes of this process

- Statewide comprehensive plan
- Guide for community & regional development
- Clear template for improving our local communities

Mission

The Capital Region develops relationships through partnerships built on assets to overcome barriers, thus improving and growing the quality of life for the region and the state.

Southwest Louisiana

Unique Community Personality & Issues

- Large corporate presence with petro-chem/concentrated Lake Charles
- Rural areas
- Storm exposure
- Texas influence (economic/cultural) – French/Cajun influence
- Unique eco-tourism potential
- Staging of oil & gas support industries
- LNG

Barriers & Impediments to Community Development

- Not a long history of regional economic development work/new area/parochialism?
- Recovery from Hurricane Rita – small business suffering
- SWOT analysis done – w/all the right players at the table?
- Lack of “certified sites” – fundraising for super regional ED Program
- Building restrictions current/future
- Lack of stable resources – shifting of tax base
- Port wars (Cameron/Lake Charles)

Desired Outcome of this Process

- A toolkit/best practice model that works for SWLA
- Incentive opportunities focusing the models (dollars and beyond)
- Documentation of local outcomes of the process/products
- Opportunities for local subsequent products to be recognized as part of the national model
- Partnerships (state, local) to work forward national funding for some levels of implementation
- Models that articulate: culture development = community development = economic development
- More diversified regional economy

Statewide Survey

Summary of Findings

In order to understand the issues affecting community and economic development in Louisiana, a statewide on-line opinion survey of local leaders was conducted. The survey gathered opinions on community and economic development factors at the community, parish, regional and state levels. Invitations went out to approximately 1,440 people the last few months of 2006, with 389 responding for a 27.1% response rate. This is a very high response rate for surveys of this type. Care was taken to solicit survey responses in all eight LED geographic regions across the state.

The views and opinions obtained in this survey constitute a statistically significant sampling of state-wide opinion. Thus, the data is an accurate gauge of the sentiments and opinions of development officials and community leaders in the state of Louisiana.

Consideration was given to communities that were significantly impacted by hurricanes Katrina and/or Rita, military base closure or downsizing, or other major event, in order to gain background information on the respondents and their situations.

- 29% reported their community had been severely or moderately damaged by hurricanes Katrina and Rita; 26% reported that their parish had been severely or moderately damaged.
- 12% reported that their parish had been impacted by military base closure, and 13% believed that it might be in the future.

Questions were asked regarding the structure of development organizations to understand how participants perceive the ability to carry out economic and community development at the community and parish level.

- 80% of respondents reported that their community has an organization that performs economic development. The percentages were similar at the parish level (82%) and regional level (81%). According to respondents, 17% of communities and 11% of parishes do NOT have economic development organizations.

- Most respondents (43%) consider their parish to be the major source of economic development services, followed by regional (29%) and community (28%).
- 65% of respondents believe their community has been moderately to very successful in economic development; the numbers are similar for parish and region.

The majority of the survey focused on assessing the views of participants on community and economic development assets and liabilities in Louisiana at the community, parish, region and state levels. These factors were often rated differently at the community, parish or regional level as indicated below.

- Community, parish and regional economic development factors that were rated by a relatively large number of respondents as ASSETS:
 - Positive attitude toward development
 - Participation by citizens in community activities (at the community level)
 - Availability/quality of higher education
 - Availability of high-speed internet service (at the community and parish levels)
 - Proximity to interstate or major highway
 - Water transportation (at the parish and region levels)
 - Quality of life factors including cost of living, recreational opportunities, arts and cultural opportunities, and historic preservation
 - Availability of sites and buildings (at the parish level)
- Community, parish and regional economic development factors that were rated by a large relatively number of respondents as LIABILITIES:
 - Planning/visioning factors such as unified vision for economic development, effective planning, effective implementation of plans, and ability to work together and avoid factionalism
 - Quality of local government (at the parish and region levels)
 - Labor availability and quality
 - K-12 education
 - Water and sewer infrastructure (at the parish and region levels)
 - Availability of air service
 - Public transportation
 - Local business incentives
 - Retail/shopping (at the parish and region levels)
 - Availability of funding for economic development
- Where economic development factor ratings significantly diverge for communities, parishes and regions:
 - Unified vision for economic development (more respondents rated this as an asset at the parish and region levels)
 - Ability to work together (more respondents rated this as an asset at the parish and region levels)

- Quality of local government (more respondents rated this as an asset at the community level, and as a liability at the parish and region levels)
 - Positive attitude toward development (more respondents rated this as an asset at the community level, and as a liability at the region level)
 - Water and sewer infrastructure (more respondents rated this as a liability at the parish and regional levels)
 - Business incentives (more respondents rated this as a liability at the parish level)
 - Availability of sites and buildings (more respondents rated this as a liability at the region level)
- Community development functions reported most frequently by respondents to be performed at the COMMUNITY level:
 - Historic preservation
 - Downtown redevelopment
 - Leadership development
 - Workforce development/training
 - Community assessments
- Community development functions reported most frequently by respondents to be performed at the PARISH level:
 - Workforce development/training
 - Community assessments
 - Leadership development
 - Small business start-up assistance
 - Historic preservation
- Community development functions reported most frequently by respondents to NOT be performed at the COMMUNITY level:
 - Neighborhood redevelopment
 - Land-use planning
 - Business retention and expansion
 - Small business start-up assistance
 - Housing improvement/affordability
- Community development functions reported most frequently by respondents to NOT be performed at the PARISH level:
 - Land-use planning
 - Downtown redevelopment (typically a community function)
 - Neighborhood redevelopment (typically a community function)
 - Housing improvement/affordability
 - Historic preservation

Even though this survey focused on community and economic development at the community, parish, and regional levels, it is important to understand the statewide environment in which policy is being made and the respondent's opinions on factors at the state level.

- STATE economic development factors that were rated by a relatively large number of respondents as ASSETS:
 - Positive attitude toward development
 - Higher education
 - Water transportation
 - Cost of living
 - Recreational and cultural opportunities

- STATE economic development factors that were rated by a relatively large number of respondents as LIABILITIES:
 - Government factors including ethics, planning, implementation of plans and leadership
 - Labor availability and quality
 - K-12 education
 - State image
 - State taxes

Finally, the respondents were asked to express their opinion on how successful their communities and parishes have been in the OUTCOME and PROCESS of community development. Outcome means improvement of the community as a place to live, work and play, and making the community attractive for business investment. Process means citizens working together effectively, planning, visioning, prioritizing, etc.

- A plurality of respondents reported that their community had been moderately successful in both the outcome and process of community development. However, less than 10 percent responded that their community had been very successful in the outcome or process of community development.

- As with communities, a plurality of respondents (43%) reported that their parish had been moderately successful in the outcome of community development. Success of parishes in the process of community development was reported to be lower (32%). Again, less than 10 percent responded that their parish had been very successful in the outcome or process of community development.

Observations and Recommendations

1. The communities (17%) and parishes (11%) that reported not having any economic development organization should make it a priority to create one. Often economic development organizations serve as the focal point of planning, visioning and the design of programs to move the community forward. In addition, these communities and parishes are at a disadvantage in recruiting new businesses and retaining and expanding existing ones.
2. Some economic and community development functions are most efficiently done at the regional level while others are best done at the parish or community level. For example, new business recruitment is usually more efficiently done at the regional level, while downtown redevelopment is usually done at the parish or community level. A plurality (43%) of respondents reported that their parish was the major source of economic development services, while 29% answered that the region was the leader and 28% answered that the community was the leader in economic development. While the survey did not determine which community and economic development functions are carried out at which levels, this result does indicate that parishes are important leaders in economic development services. In most cases, it is preferable for parish or regional organizations to take the lead on most economic development services. Communities in the same parish that create their own full-service economic development organizations are duplicating efforts and diluting their strength. It is encouraging to note that 81% of the respondents reported that their community and parish were covered by a regional economic development organization.
3. Approximately one third of the respondents reported that their community, parish and region has not been successful in economic development. While the data are not sufficient to prove this, there is probably a strong correlation between perceived success and the community and economic assets and functions included in this survey. Improvement in the process of community and economic development and related assets will generally lead to improvement in outcomes. As a start, all economic development organizations in Louisiana at every level should have a strategic plan in place with clearly stated goals and objectives so they can regularly review their progress and make adjustments as necessary.
4. A variety of factors were rated highly as economic development assets. Some are attitudinal (e.g. positive attitude toward development, citizen participation) and some are more tangible (e.g. quality of life factors, internet service and water transportation). The top-rated liability factors involved visioning, planning, implementing and working together. These are core community development "process" factors, and these results indicate that communities, parishes and the state all need to work on improving community development process capacity. Education and training in this should be a priority.
5. Among the community development factors reported as NOT being done at the community or parish levels, perhaps the most disturbing are business retention

and expansion, new-business start-up assistance and land-use planning. The first two factors are absolute core economic development functions. Most jobs are created by retention and expansion and new business start-up, and these should be priorities for parish and community economic development organizations. The lack of a comprehensive land use plan and zoning regulations (certainly at the community level) can put an area at a disadvantage in recruiting new industry and retaining and expanding existing industry. Without these, companies might be concerned about problems with incompatible surrounding land use now or in the future.

6. Not surprisingly, positive attitude toward development, cost of living, water transportation and recreational and cultural opportunities were highly rated state assets. Respondents also believe higher education in the state is an asset. Factors most commonly cited as liabilities at the state level include government leadership, ethics and planning, labor, K-12 education and state image and taxes. These ratings by state residents would probably closely match the ratings of non-residents. In some corners, the stereotypical view of Louisiana as inefficiently governed, ethically challenged and generally different from other states does prevail. Very often states and regions can most effectively counter these images by addressing them directly in marketing and public relations campaigns. For example, Buffalo New York advertises itself as the "home of snow-white winters." Everybody knows it is cold in Buffalo, but "snow-white winters" evokes a less harsh image and might even appeal to winter sports enthusiasts. Louisiana should take a similar approach and address these images, whether real or perceived, head-on.
7. A plurality of respondents reported that their communities and parishes have been "moderately successful" in economic development and in the outcome and process of community development. Only a small percentage responded "very successful" in these areas. However, the respondents believe that their communities and especially their parishes are less successful in the *process* of community development as opposed to the *outcome*. This agrees with the findings in (4) above where community development process factors were rated as liabilities. Again, education in the process of community development is called for.

Statewide Focus Groups

Overview

A series of focus groups was carried out to explore the root causes and possible solutions of community and economic development-related assets and liabilities that exist in Louisiana. Results of these focus groups will be used to formulate recommendations for community development tools and programs that will be utilized in a statewide community development program.

The focus group technique represents a small group dynamics approach to social and other types of marketing research. Typically, eight to twelve specifically recruited participants (screened according to defined client specifications) are engaged in discussions directed by an experienced facilitator. This type of interactive environment encourages involvement among participants. Ideas and solutions are often uncovered which do not usually surface through conventional survey methods.

The focus group interaction seeks to develop insight and direction rather than definitive or precise measures. Focus groups have been conducted for the purpose of qualitative insight, such as gaining an understanding of types of thought, attitudes, and behaviors about specific issues.

Overwhelmingly, the focus groups identified communication and networking as key to both the root causes, continued leveraging, and solutions for the assets and liabilities discussed in the focus groups. This can not be understated as to how important communication tools and techniques will be promoting a statewide community development program.

Funding and financial resources must also be closely examined as a cause and solution of assets and liabilities across the state. Further study must be done related to funding as it relates to any goal area and the project as a whole to consider viability and sustainability.

Training and education were also identified as both causes and solutions for all liabilities and assets of the state. Focus group participants stated time and again that this would be pivotal to success.

Method

Sample & Design

Eight focus groups with a total of 87 participants were conducted, in February 2007, in the following locations statewide:

- Acadiana Region @ Lafayette
- Bayou/Orleans/River Parishes @ Thibodaux
- E. Florida Parishes @ Hammond
- W. Florida Parishes @ Baton Rouge
- Central Louisiana @ Pineville
- Northwest Louisiana @ Minden
- Northeast Louisiana @ Monroe
- Northwest Louisiana @ Natchitoches

The focus group participants identified themselves as willing to participate during the statewide survey process summarized in the previous section. An additional group that acted as a “beta-test” group was conducted at the LED offices in Baton Rouge in January and consisted of about 20 people from the Baton Rouge area and LED personnel. The beta group assisted in working out any rough spots in the process so that the statewide groups would go as smoothly as possible.

In all eight focus groups, the participants came together in the beginning for introductions and background information disseminated by a facilitator. All focus groups received exactly the same information through a PowerPoint Presentation (found in the Appendix). The participants then separated into one of three breakout sessions of their own choosing based upon the topics being discussed. Each breakout session discussed three topic areas for about an hour. Two liabilities and one asset, identified from the survey, were covered so that at the end of the breakout time all participants came back together and had nine topics to discuss as a large group. As a group, the participants received a report from a leader of each breakout session covering their three topics and a discussion ensued to add any additional ideas that might be developed.

Topics covered were identified in the statewide survey (discussed earlier in this report) and were listed as liabilities or assets. The focus group participants were encouraged to focus on root causes and solutions for liabilities and continued leveraging and solutions for assets. Further discussion and rehashing of issues was discouraged by facilitators as the survey covered this in detail.

Table 1 shows the topics discussed and how they were dispersed around the state. Each topic area received input four to five times in various focus groups in order to get as much input as possible. After introductions, the participants were given some background information on the status of the project and a brief summary of the survey.

Table 1: Issue Disbursement

Focus Group	Focus Group Issue Assignments																							
	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Issues considered Liabilities																								
Visioning/ Strategic Planning	X				X				X							X								
Strategic Plan Execution		X				X				X				X					X					
Lack of ED Funding			X	X				X			X								X					
Lack of Business Retention and Expansion					X				X				X				X			X				
Small Business Start-up & Entrepreneurship Assistance						X								X							X	X		
K-12 Education							X								X	X						X		
Risk of Natural Disasters (Perception v. Reality)					X			X						X		X								
Emergency Preparedness				X					X				X				X							
Public transportation			X									X							X			X		
Labor Availability & Quality	X									X							X			X			X	
Issues considered Assets																								
Positive Attitude toward Community & Economic Development	X						X			X						X								
Higher Education		X						X			X						X							
Leadership development			X						X			X						X						
Water Transportation				X									X							X			X	
Historic Preservation/Downtown redevelopment					X									X					X			X		
Quality of Life						X									X				X			X		
Pros & Cons of Certification		X									X							X					X	

Focus Group Findings

Lack of Visioning/Strategic Planning

Root causes:

- Governmental bodies that fail to work together and politicizing community development issues
- Change or lack of leadership
- Ignorance and selfishness
- Lack of accountability
- Factionalism
- Lack of resources and/or funding
- Actual problems or issues are not identified in order to provide necessary background information during the planning process
- No benchmarks are gathered for the process
- Lack of citizen involvement because of diverse interests and competition for available time to volunteer
- Apathy
- Lack of ownership of the process
- "One size fits all" planning and thinking about what fits a community
- Little cooperation in bridging urban and rural visions

Recommended Solutions or Tools:

- Must involve the populace, development of plan should involve all stakeholders in the community
- Better planning, foresight for what is good for community. Be proactive rather than reactive.
- Economic development commissioned bodies that coordinate visioning and strategic planning process
- Communication is key and meeting more often helps a lot
- Bridge urban & rural resources and vision
- Sustainability – Make sure that the vision works with existing assets
- Coordinate education with needs demonstrated by planning process (i.e. If planning is related to retirement, education needs to done on the need for nursing homes)
- Use existing organizations to reach all interest groups
- Educate citizens on the importance of strategic planning and their role in it; develop informed citizens that will hold leadership accountable
- Identify funding sources
- Use neighboring communities and best practice examples to show possible results
- Plans should be attainable, local and regional, flexible and adaptable

- Plans should have both immediate and long term goals that are realistic and doable
- Plans should be reviewed annually to determine if the plan is being implemented and goals are being reached.
- Celebrate and publicize success
- Plan should include measurable outcomes and specify who is accountable for outcomes
- Tools to address apathy
- Insist/encourage leaders to get training for leadership
- Encourage leaders to be open-minded and respectful of the views of citizens
- Think regionally to do and fund
- Build plans that cross institutional boundaries
- Planning needs to be done before zoning
- Avoid duplication
- Need to focus on land use/comprehensive planning
- Businesses are asked frequently to assist. They need to see some action first before they will believe and get involved in another effort for economic and community development. "Fill in potholes first, then tell me about the plan"
- Look at structure of the organization that is coordinating the plan and visioning

Following through and implementing community and economic development plans

Root causes:

- Lack of funding
- History of non-achievement
- Lack of trust
- Lack of proper "lobbying"
- Lack of physical assets
- Lack of preparation for perceived economic development
- Failure to follow through
- Community leaders do not focus on problems
- Don't meet often enough (at least once a month)
- No one can do economic and community development full time (all have jobs)
- Leadership - No commitment from leaders/elected officials to implement
- Poor strategic plan – no implementation steps
- Unrealistic expectations due to lack of accurate assessment of assets and needs
- Lack of community buy-in due to apathy
- Those involved in implementing the plan are not a participant in developing plan
- Lack of training to develop a strategic plan
- Not linking limited resources to community needs
- Political decisions vs. community development decisions
- Lack of citizen participation
- All of community is not involved with plan

Recommended Solutions or Tools:

- Make sure that there is “real” community buy in
- Stop talking....ACT
- Involve the entire community and have diversified input
- Development creative source of funding – ex. Interest on funds from local government agencies
- Use grant-writers to secure federal/private funds
- Build in accountability in the implementation plan. Plans need to be very specific “do lists” with accountability and benchmarks
- Be flexible – willing to change/adapt plan to a change in situation
- Keep public things public and private things private
- Publicize accomplishments
- Community leaders come together to meet specifically on community and economic development efforts
- Keep community and economic development efforts in spotlight
- Volunteers need to step up to the plate until a professional can be hired or assist
- Skilled leadership in strategic planning that have been trained and everyone in the process needs training
- Agenda management – keep focus
- One person needs to be primary “driver.” Delegation of responsibilities so not just one person is responsible
- Seed money – LED – Grants
- Contributions from Business Community
- Broaden scope and extent of leadership training & development
- Need champions for each goal of the plan
- Funding pools for supporting implementation
- Directory of resources for communities to tap
- Accurate data (hard data),
- Involvement of everyone in process
- Training for community/elected leaders to develop and implement a plan – educate on why a plan can be beneficial to a community

Lack of Economic Development Funding

Root causes:

- Not enough money
- Federal grants require matching funds
- Out-migration of population – fewer taxes
- Low priority from general public – because they see outside business coming in such as Walmart or Home Depot – but don't understand the bigger issues
- No parity in funding sources
- Too much state dependence
- Unaware of all funding sources (state, federal, local, private, etc.)

- Funding is not consistent – lacks sustainability
- No funding – no program – no economic “development” of new start-up and existing businesses
- Not enough incentives for small new startups and existing businesses
- Lack of understanding of the need for economic development programs by elected officials and citizens

Solutions or Tools Needed:

- Community mentoring
- Entrepreneurial development
- OEDC Landcorp Funding – properly leveraged
- Planned statewide TIF
- Coordination of economic development efforts in the community and/or region
- Leadership education & understanding
- Economic development needs to have general public buy-in
- Link funding dollars invested by developers/jobs
- Flexible funding for asset building (i.e. Speculative Bldg Programs)
- Regional EDO's act as a clearinghouse for all information
- Annual update/overview of information available to region (new board members, etc.)
- Directory of all resources (funding) federal, state, local
- Encourage all EDO's and their boards to contact legislatures regarding funding to support
- LED matching grant/regional award programs
- Incorporate local economic development finance with basic economic development training
- Align small communities more effectively with technical assistance resources (i.e. grant writing)
- Long-term state and local funding solutions
- Economic development needs an address

Lack of Business Retention & Expansion

Root causes:

- Current focus is on net new jobs, not retention of existing jobs.
- Other states can offer full benefits to lure businesses away from Louisiana
- New inquiries are overwhelming
- Lack of funding
- Tax structure, insurance, utility costs
- Neglect of existing businesses
- Workforce training
- Lack of semi-skilled labor force
- Many small business owners have no mgt/business skills

- Community development is not an important issue to officials/leaders in the community
- Lack of priority and understanding
- Loss of business without awareness on a state and local level – small business loss is not being tracked

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Retention incentive packages not focused on net new jobs.
- Develop incentive package to help existing at-risk companies remain in Louisiana, without requiring additional employees
- Maintain a good pro business climate in the state
- Consistent and ongoing visitation program to gather information and identify threats and opportunities
- Work with state government, regional allies, and businesses to come up with a plan to develop technology and innovation
- Workforce development: funding
- Insurance: Workers comp – compare programs to competing states and implement best practices – Healthcare – same, best practices
- Utilities: Focus on lowest cost of transmission and generation make more of that type
- Perceived lack of available incentive for existing businesses
- Workforce training (1-3 year program is a problem)
- More money into business development for small businesses
- More coordination with local trade schools and businesses
- Mindset is that NEW jobs are glamorous
- Small and medium sized enterprises need more focus!
- LED is graded same on both new and retention/expansion
- Need training programs on customer service
- Training programs for public officials/community leaders (through appropriate association) IEDC, CDI, etc.
- Community certification
- Recognize existing businesses within the community

Small Business Start-Up and Entrepreneurship Assistance

Root causes:

- Not enough economic development assistance (funded programs) for VERY small businesses (both technical and financial)
- Lack of dedicated funding to small development (training and services)
- Lack of information for potential entrepreneurs (support realistic look at plans and redirecting if needed)
- There is more emphasis on recruitment than entrepreneurial development
- Too much focus on big companies with big quantity of jobs – need to shift to more for smaller
- Lack of access to capital for start-up and small businesses

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Adequately fund small business programs, technical assistance; financing and education
- Leverage resources to assist (small business development centers, chambers, ED and commissions)
- More funds available – low interest loans
- Loan guarantees (fund it)
- Educate legislature in the need to continue funding
- Use traditional and non-traditional avenues to market programs and services (traditional: newspaper – nontraditional: church)
- Business plan competition with winner getting support
- Leverage new market tax credits to establish community development financial institutions
- Post Katrina breakdown of entire Louisiana symposiums
- Incubators – specific focus and connected to higher education – must have full range of business development services
- Access to early stage capital – local and regional strategies supported by state
- Cluster strategy to develop culture of entrepreneurship and risk tolerance
- Education pre-K and up
- Partnership between higher education and business
- Use capital to recruit start ups – ask wealthy families in region – what would it take for you to invest? (professional management)
- Funding for “lifestyle” businesses

K-12 Education

Root causes

- Perception problem – long term misconception
- Lack of funding – state and local level
- Lack of highly qualified teachers and need parental involvement
- Lower academic standards throughout state due to low expectations
- No child left behind is inhibiting higher performance standards
- Now everything based on numbers
- Education system not based on best practices due to “incestuous education industry” (view it from our perspective vs. best way)
- Lack of trainable workforce
- High drop out rate a factor in higher crime
- Loss of quality of life for future industry
- Socioeconomic environment
- Included Preschool up to 12
- Education system based on industrial model
- K-12 aimed at higher education – leaving out 80% of students suited or desire technical training

- Segregating high and low socio-economic level – abandoning the poor

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Communication – improved through school boards, media. Emphasize good and positive
- Take politics out of school. Change system for selecting board
- Increase funding both state and local arenas
- Promote parents being involved
- Teach accountability to students - a must
- Add educational requirement as qualification for school board elections (i.e. at least high school or GED)
- Recruit corporate partners for local schools – “hardwired local champion”
- Pattern after the best educational systems
- Proper allocation of assets including: teacher salaries, supplies, facilities, etc.
- Accountability in school system throughout
- Need dual-track system – college and tech prep
- Utilize technical colleges more to develop classes for students not headed to college – tech skills applicable to local work environment – teach skills needed for assimilation into state workforce
- NSU – Center for children & families. 17 parishes. Parents as teachers program – Kentucky – need to benchmark – Focus on early childhood
- Fully funding pre K (LA-4)
- New models of education focused on knowledge economy
- Change system before investing more money
- Incentives for good teachers in impoverished neighborhoods
- Mentor programs & more community involvement – school as centers of community
- Adult education and life long learning
- Mixed income neighborhoods to address poverty issues and education performance
- Teach new basic skills of the knowledge economy
- Do something

Risk of Natural Disasters

Root causes

- Perception is greater than reality due to national news media focusing on bad news and the implication that is applied to the entire state
- Citizen complacency
- Adverse effect of natural disaster on unaffected areas (increased insurance costs for unaffected areas)
- Regional problem – mostly confined to coastal parishes. Effects all of the state

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- State should compile a data and statistics (comparative data) to show that Louisiana is no more at risk from natural disasters than other areas of the country. Stress the infrequency of major disasters
- Develop a public media campaign to publicize the data
- Marketing – telling the truth
- Personal responsibility
- Marketing and PR campaigns (image development – positive)
- Statewide plan should have different levels (building codes, insurance risks, etc)
- Campaign to demonstrate the geographical diversity of the state – concentrate on positive

Emergency Preparedness

Root causes:

- Protection of investment, including infrastructure – locally and statewide
- Our national image is that our state is poorly managed
- Ill prepared for crisis
- Individual skills are inadequate
- Lack of coordinated technology
- Denial – lack of planning, commitment of resources for individuals and communities
- Focus on hurricane planning (other risks ignored)
- Tendency for churches/orgs to take on more than they can handle

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Aggressive, concise, centralized and coordinated planning on local, regional, and state level
- Increase coordination and communication between all segments of the community
- Each community should conduct a threat assessment
- Continue progress in obtaining connectivity in communication technology
- Statewide channel for all city/parish/regional emergency responders
- Central location for relief (72 hour) supplies and equipment to support areas south of I-10
- Stress need for individual citizens preparedness for 72 hours
- Redundancy of messages for preparedness
- Local/Regional/Statewide exercises and drills
- Parish funding for evacuee sheltering and coordination
- Pre-positioning of supply point
- University offering in emergency preparedness
- Get public involved in emergency communication chain so that chain can't break (first responders)
- Think beyond hurricanes, railroad & highway accidents need consideration
- Incorporate medical facilities and education with emergency planning needs

- Small business planning (US Chamber has guidelines)

Public Transportation

Root causes

- Need jobs to transport people to; people cannot get work
- Lack of transportation to higher education
- Cost
- No planning for the future especially to tie the regions together
- Lack of state funding
- Urban growth burst – outgrew transportation system
- Interstate has rerouted commerce
- In rural areas, it is a problem of distance

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Transportation to/from Educational Institutes
- Establish regional transportation
- Private foundation grants
- Groups of businesses located close to each other could provide
- Industry provided transportation (short term)
- Private vanpools (short term)
- High speed rail connecting the region
- Successes/best practices of other similar areas
- Toll roads
- Encourage 2007 legislation public/private partnership for infrastructure improvement
- Explore leverage of transit oriented development of nodes – “taxing districts”
- Donor/recipient state status for federal highway funds. How can LA get more dollars and become net recipient state?
- Use incremental dollars to fund inter-city transit/rail
- Blue line to main regional areas
- Transportation for college students to school – pay to ride – businesses donate
- Add system for elderly and handicapped in rural areas (database)
- Limited rural transportation – elderly only
- Public private partnerships
- Emergency preparedness – have communities become involved in getting community volunteers to be prepared for emergencies
- Encourage employers to establish “transportation networks” for employees
- Encourage employers to establish flex hours to accommodate childcare and dual family members work schedules
- Municipal incentives to establish carpool lanes on freeways
- Need to quantify cost to business

Labor Availability & Quality

Root causes:

- Dysfunctional families
- Dysfunctional school system
- Lack of funds
- Companies want a return on investments – training, work ethic, pride, integrity
- Does low education = low wages in an area?
- High dropout rate
- Drugs (more & ethical problem)
- Skilled Labor
- Low literacy levels
- Work ethic decline
- Communication between industry/business and education
- Stigma of going into “trade” as a profession/vocation

Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Support character building organizations
- Develop work related programs in schools – encourage businesses to participate
- Improve funding for vocational training
- Develop a community college system including rural areas as sites
- Adults grow up and become positive role models
- Teach/mentor – ethics, pride, integrity
- Elect educated/qualified individuals to the school boards – provide educational programs, leadership – teach them to see the big picture – Education = Economic Development
- Community involvement
- Communication with school educators and foster partnerships between teachers & business
- Use business leaders and media to tell the children about their futures
- Access future job needs/skills of existing and future businesses
- Promote completion of minimal education for all students – HS, Tech, College
- Create “academic champion” recognition
- Promote value of 2-year professional degree programs
- Job availability/rewards for HS and Tech School completers
- Certification for specialties (i.e. shipbuilders, film & video)
- Make parents more accountable
- Tie government assistance received to keeping children in school
- Work closer with university on business skills needed
- Develop kids for trades (those not college bound) early on
- Continue to improve quality of life to keep college grads
- Good students are leaving. Need to keep NSU grads here
- Promote articulation agreements (BPCC to NSU)
- Drug education – need to inform workplace consequences!

- Bring them home – bring back brightest/best
- “No Jobs” – Leave, then companies come in and people aren’t there
- Opportunity – NSU Grads/Alumni
- Germany model – 8th grade attitude – have choice to go to trade school during high school. No stigma. Without degree, skilled trades-people receive less respect.
- Programs educating the public
- Changing cultural attitudes
- Training programs available locally
- Partner with faith based organizations
- Raise awareness of programs available to the workforce
- Law enforcement
- Find root causes by local area and work to eliminate
- Prevention through education
- Implement life skill curriculum in the school system
- Business private partnership
- Create a “mock business” scenario and have each student role play various positions in the business world, e.g. HR, President, VP, etc.
- The “school experience” should be same as “accountability” in the job world
- Create a program to bring seniors to right skill level to fill job openings as soon as they graduate
- Related to the “USA’s Immigration Policy” – needs revamping
- Make LA a more “tax friendly” state for job recruitment
- More investigation of telecommuting/other means to match people and workplace
- Life-skill classes in public school system (build life skills)
- Need communication between educators and companies (build partnerships).

Positive Attitude toward Community & Economic Development

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Develop a common vision/interest
- Keep communicating – improve network
- Deliberate about including small communities
- Discuss resources
- Network and tell your story: Sell yourself and promote yourself
- Support each other & work together
- Use your utility companies as a bridge or partner
- Communicate your positive attributes
- Establish goals – develop support for these goals – using every facet of community & parish

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Develop good “media” relations (not just newspaper & TV)
- Promote positive attitude – publicize successes and celebrate them
- Elect positive public officials
- Be inclusive of Total Community
- Recognize and reward citizens who contribute to the community
- Develop positive slogans
- Use associations/org. publications
- Follow through on projects
- Link with resources (ex. University)
- Focus on facilitating access to resources regardless of jurisdictional boundaries
- Develop template/best practices for how communities can effectively tap university resources
- Use your resources
- Stop reinventing the wheel
- Develop formal working relationships (MOD's) with universities, tech colleges/community colleges
- Strategic planning involving every sector – public & private
- Bring together elected officials at every level and the other major stakeholders – develop a common vision and support for that vision

Higher Education

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Need more business collaboration with education and training facilities. Continue to emphasize the importance of collaboration
- Emphasize community college
- Community College/Tech School – need to get the word out. Bigger push on “marginal” kids
- Return rate – what do we do with those who drop out?
- Community Colleges/Tech Schools – some disconnect between with community needs and what schools need

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Business advisory committees to the institutions (advise of industry specific needs)
- Educators need to be involved in all aspects of the community (know the needs of the community)
- Design solution that meets specific community needs (design on the local level)
- Co-locate community development organizations and technical schools – synergy
- Keep abreast of developing technologies/industries/innovation
- Keep abreast of local changes
- Communication between businesses and trade school (training)
- Certified programs

- Communicating value of technical training as career track that can be rewarding
- Partner with community college
- Input from business community on types of jobs needed with more specialization in universities (intellectual property)
- Use university resources to offer training for local economic development
- Call initiative – potential for raising adult education in state
 - Promote and support this
- Continued articulation between community colleges and universities – improve this, perhaps expand relationships to teachers
- “Parents as teachers” program
- Be attuned to community needs
- LONI access for NSU/All state universities
- Expand SEDC at NSU – unanimous support

Leadership Development

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Develop ways to motivate young people. Require students to do community service.
- High school leadership classes (Interact, Key Club, Student Council)
- Leadership programs at University, Community College, and Tech
- Expose kids to work/various occupations
- Encourage organization participation
 - Corporate sponsors (Utility Co./Hospital)
 - ABWA (Leadership Tangipahoa)
- Leadership development training at local level

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Mentoring
 - High school level
 - University level
- Require students to do community service
- Secure more corporate sponsorships to cover costs of participation in programs
- Ensure access to existing leadership training in state (i.e. LSU Ag Center/Extension)
- Challenge organizations with existing leadership programs to go into the schools
- Best practices of other communities
- Letting communities know about programs that are available
- Higher qualifications to run for elected office
- Chamber leadership program – increase offerings!
- Women for gov't center – NSU – training in law to hold public office.
- Need to define what leadership really is (PR campaign)
- Voter education is important! State training for rural areas

- Required education for elected officials

Water Transportation

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Regional plan for tourism/commercial use
- Development of other uses (i.e. energy)
- Funding infrastructure – US/Foreign
- Advertisement/promotion/education
- Emergency plan for port coordination
- Alternate energy
- Lack of funding

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Modern infrastructure and continued maintenance of same (i.e. bridges and pollution)
- Salt water intrusion
- Address transition between transportation modes (intermodal)
- Work to keep water transportation
- Price competition (pilot fees, etc.)
- Dredging – open/accessible
- Convert port priority funds to create minimum capital funding for ports annually (similar to AIP) with discretionary award fund for competitive projects (similar to EDAR)
- AE: use ports to move bulk fuel producing cargo to eliminate burden on other transportation modes and reduce costs
- Design emergency model to coordinate cargo for best use of available facilities to retain port users
- Advertising and education develop specific campaigns re: How LA ports work for US Global economy
- Create cooperative marketing campaign to support existing port campaigns
- Include port directors in economic development missions
- Need for additional port development
- Support successful ports
- Better advertisement & education of ports
- Strategic emergency plan for ports
- Alternate energy
- Educating state and federal representatives/officials by way of support from a local level
- It's all about "costs" of transport!
- Are there tax issues?
- We should look at the whole transportation issue in LA – air, water, truck, RR

Historic Preservation/Downtown Redevelopment

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Streamline, enhance and simplify the incentive packages for historic preservation/downtown redevelopment
- Continue to expand the existing mainstreet program
- Currently incentives geared to new construction in historic/downtown – need to examine this
- Promote residential development
- Preserve, document, and coordinate current historic assets
- Too much emphasis on South LA

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Create incentive packages that are as economically attractive to the developer as new construction
- Equalize costs of historic preservation and new construction with incentives that are evaluated annually
- Create incentives based on current economic conditions (like a COLA)
- Don't let incentives become outdated
- Open communications between historical groups and developers – focus on positives for both
- Promote program to appreciate audience (educate those who have not set up programs to do so)
- Encourage partnership within state agencies (cultural programs funding leveraged)
- Encourage use of historic preservation tax credit program
- Work with city planners to encourage multi-use of downtown areas
- Continued capital investment to downtown areas
 - Infrastructure
 - Purchase of property
- Develop incentives for construction and refurbishment (building code modifications)
- Market the incentives to locating in downtown
- Market the downtowns of Louisiana through CRT office
- Coordinated regional approach
 - Document consistently – mapping, oral histories, photos, telling stories consistently
 - Regional strategy through CERT and its institutions to bring communities together
 - Common approach on ordinances, zoning and preservation practices
 - North LA proposes to develop a model for regional historic preservation approach
- Tremendous economic development potential
- Build on success of main street communities to begin network

- Tie to economic development – quality of life
- National Center for Historic Preservation at NSU

Quality of Life

How can this asset be leveraged to its fullest? How can its development be continued?

- Promote and build on positives (culture, family, hunting, fishing, recreation)
- LA needs to ensure that our quality of life definition is relevant to the rest of the nation. Identify our true assets and market them to the “customers” (internal and external) perspective
- Continual re-evaluation of assets and weaknesses
- Asset mapping – an inventory (up-to-date) of all quality of life assets, assembled by a broad cross section of the community
- Promote and preserve all assets, including those that promote wholesome family well-being, senior citizens

Recommended Solutions/Tools Needed:

- Identify and motivate underserved populations – Lack of recreation leads to crime
- Building coalition to identify and work on activities (problem is everyone's)
- Best practices – what works in other communities – what ideas may be pursued here?
- More public access to recreational assets
- Continual re-evaluation
- Assess the “customers” needs and expectations
- Be proactive not reactive (look nationally and stay ahead of trends)
- A broad, effective media campaign (highlight positives)
- Local media must partner with economic development
- Accurate (honest) stats are needed
- Encourage non-profits to develop community services – grant funds
- Media-blitz – nationwide – advertise state in positive light
- Focus more on entire state
- Educate youth about culture & history to appreciate
- Eco-tourism
- Use sister city programs
- Invite elderly groups
- Need a good slogan!
- Invite the snowbirds
- Market toward adventure seekers
- Instill pride in community
- Need to address poverty

Community Certification

How could this help Louisiana? How do we get communities involved or participate?

- This would help smaller and rural communities that lack funding and training necessary to do economic development. Offering monetary incentives to communities willing to participate. Incentive given would depend on level of certification
- "Team City" concept spread over entire state
- Communities will unify – local & statewide certification
- Certify local community leaders about their role in economic development
- Give some credibility to communities
- Helps community leaders organize, focus and recognize strengths and weaknesses
- If a certification program, what's the benefit for the community?
- Attitude adjustments for public and private sectors – John Kennedy

Recommended Solutions/Tools or Incentives Needed:

- Collaboration with "Team City" like programs to establish guidelines for certification
- Contracts with private entities to provide training and implementation and to monitor progress (take out of state hands)
- Have state assist with partnering smaller towns with others who are already doing economic development
- Have yearly standards that would need to be met
- Establish set deliverables
- Publicize and celebrate achievement of status
- Think regional!
- LED to be more visible in rural communities
- Rural communities need tools
- Creative recruiting of communities
- Regional certification – set example for local community
- Promote value to community and hold elected officials accountable
- Develop schedule of multiple training offerings for local economic development and use distance learning
- Recognition of certification
- Set aside portions of state budget for training
- Assess city/town/rural resources
- Train cross sections of community
- Prospects see that community has made a commitment
- Sign of accreditation – establishes a community
- Set & meet standards
- Develop a statewide program
- Program needs to emphasize sustainability

- Research “best practices” around the country and develop “LA programs” – funding??
- Make sure it addresses unique assets of each community
- Make it a source of pride

Second Working Group Meeting

Synopsis

The objective of the second meeting was to bring the whole Working Group together again to assist in prioritizing the tools desired by the participants in the survey and focus groups. During the morning session, the agenda consisted of the following:

- Retracing our Steps/Background
- Presentation of the Methodology used in the survey and focus groups
- Overview of the results of the Survey
- Overview of the results of the Focus Group Meetings

In the afternoon, the group separated into three breakout groups in order to prioritize the solutions offered up by focus group participants. The component list consisted of the following list from the focus groups:

- Communication Tools
 - Databases:
 - Funding Sources
 - State and Regional Community & Economic Development Resources
 - Best Practices
 - Statewide Community Development Network
 - Marketing and Communications Program
- Training Tools
 - State Training Programs
 - Online training modules
 - Scheduled Webinars
 - In person training
 - Topics to include: Leadership, ethics, C & ED, visioning, strategic planning and implementation, grant writing
 - Specific Training Tools
 - Community Assessment Tool and Training Manual/Resource Guide
 - Strategic Planning Template and Process Training Manual/Resource Guide
 - Marketing Your Community Training/Resource Guide
 - Business Retention/Expansion Resource Guide
 - New Business Startup and Entrepreneurship Resource Guide
 - Emergency Preparedness Resource Guide
 - Developing Community Level Incentive Programs
 - Lean Community Guide
 - Land Planning & Smart Growth Guide
 - Ethics Training

- Leadership Training & Resource Guide
- Basic Community & Economic Development
- Grant Writing
- Certification Program
 - Leveled
 - Lean – Technology – Innovation
 - Emergency Preparedness
 - Manual and Training materials
 - Incentives
 - Research Center
 - Marketing
- State Legislative Lobbyist/Lobbying Task Force on Community & Economic Development
 - Educating
 - Public relations
 - Legislative agenda positioning state for success
- State Level Task Forces
 - Workforce Development
 - University – Community Colleges as CED Assets
 - Education
 - Elected Official Training
 - Incentives/Business Climate
 - Lean & Technology/Innovation Center of Excellence
 - Emergency Preparedness

Summary of Working Group Recommendations

Group #1 Prioritized Toolsets	Group #2 Prioritized Toolsets	Group #3 Prioritized
1. Community Certification	1. Workforce Development	1. Communication Tools
2. Training Tools	2. Training Tools	2. State Legislature Lobbying Task Force
3. K-12 Education	3. Community Certification	3. State Level Task Forces

As community planners, we must always be vigilant in preventing duplication of services and utilizing scarce resources very carefully. K-12 Education and Workforce Development came up frequently in both the survey and focus groups as a great concern for the citizens of the State of Louisiana. As these apply to tools that could be used in a toolkit focusing on Community Development, they must be training and templates for collaboration among community development organizations with special focus. The State already has many programs and services directed at workforce development and K-12 education and so the toolkit must assist communities in this collaboration and unifying vision for improvement in these areas.

Please see below for detailed findings of breakout groups.

Group #1

Component #1: Certification

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Content/Evaluate Best Practices
2. Unique to Louisiana / Niche Certification
3. Attainable and achievable
4. State level
5. Reward-based – what's in it for the community?

Component #2: Training Tools

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Identify target audience/market
2. Evaluate existing training resources
3. Identify trainer/Certify Training Person/Train the Trainer Program
4. LED owns

Component #3: K-12 Education

Strategies for Implementation

1. Promote/support Pre-K early ED programs and universal Pre-K
2. Support high school redesign/dual track
3. Skills based training

Group #2

Component #1: Workforce Development

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Directly link employee skills with skills needed by industry
2. Education of high school and college level guidance counselors regarding regional job skills needed

Component #2: Tools

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Free training tools (hard copy and electronically based)
2. Where to find funding opportunities – LED Website & other partners' libraries
3. Best practices resource guide

Component #3: Community Certification Program

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Interactive On-line Certification with access for Rural communities
2. "Reward" for achieving certification
3. Coordination of available training programs – state, local and non-profit

Group #3

Component #1: Communication Tools

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Use what is in place (share resources)
2. Databases: websites: blogs - (must be kept current)

Component #2: State Legislative/Lobby Task Force for Community & Economic Development

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Legislative agenda to position for success. i.e. LED has agenda should submit to legislature
2. Educate: regional position papers submitted to representative; educate legislature on successful strategies in other areas
3. Public relations: advise, educate & involve public (newspaper, newsletters)

Component #3: State Level Task Forces

Strategies for Implementation:

1. Education: incorporate training (career path) in middle and high school
2. Workforce: educate based on needs of industry – industry should have input into course work
3. Elected official training on basics of ED/CD and ethics.