
COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

January 15th and 16th, 2020

January 15th - Andersen Enrichment Center | 120 Ezra Rust Drive | Saginaw, MI 48601

January 16th – YMCA | 1915 Fordney St. | Saginaw, MI 48601 (a)

BACKGROUND & INVITATION

The East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) has engaged the economic development consulting firm TIP Strategies, based in Austin and Seattle to lead the strategic planning process for producing a new 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the 14-County EMCOG Region.

As part of the planning process, we are seeking the input of key stakeholders that play important roles in the economic health of the region. We invite you to participate in a discussion about solutions to the region's economic challenges. As a business or community leader, your input on strategies for the region is critical. The focus sessions represent the 5 goal areas of the current CEDS document which can be found at <http://www.emcog.org/ceds.asp>. These five goal areas may change as a result of this strategic planning process.

The following focus sessions are scheduled:

January 15, 2020	10:30 am - Noon	<i>Economic Development, Marketing & Sustainability</i>
January 15, 2020	1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	<i>Entrepreneurship & Innovation</i>
January 15, 2020	3:00 pm – 4:30 pm	<i>Talent & Workforce Development</i>
January 16, 2020	8:30 am – 10:00 am	<i>Transportation & Other Infrastructure</i>
January 16, 2020	10:30 am – Noon	<i>Place-Making, Equitable Development & Community Resiliency</i>

The discussion of the focus group is meant to be an informal conversation to give participants the opportunity to provide input for the strategic plan. We understand that some areas will generate considerably more discussion than others; this is to be expected and is more important than a structured answer to each question. **NOTE: You may attend more than one focus discussion session because for many of us our work is integrated into multiple focus areas.**

This discussion will be an integral part of the CEDS that influences how the EMCOG and other regional partners plan strategically for effective direction of resources for economic development. At this meeting you will have the opportunity to share your views. We encourage you to join us on this initiative which marks the beginning of a new chapter in economic development in the region.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FORMAT

The focus group is meant to be an informal conversation to give participants the opportunity to provide us input for the CEDS. No prior preparation on behalf of the participants is necessary. The information gathered is used for background and idea generation purposes only. We don't attribute quotes. So please be open and candid.

The consulting team will begin asking some broad questions about the economic development challenges and opportunities facing the region as a whole and your industry/topic area. From the responses, more specific ideas and issues will be identified and discussed. Key questions and discussion points are outlined in the following pages.

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(a) the Saginaw YMCA is one block from the Andersen Enrichment Center. <https://saginawymca.org/>
All January 15th meetings will continue to be held at the Andersen Enrichment Center.

For your information, the following are a sampling of potential questions that may be asked during an applicable focus meeting:

Cross-jurisdictional Coordination

Purpose: *To identify opportunities throughout region for government & public leadership coordination.*

Sample Questions

- Is there adequate coordination among jurisdictions and utility providers in supporting development?
- Are there governmental barriers that impede development? Are there examples of good coordination?
- What aspects of the development process do you think could be streamlined?
- Where do you see specific barriers to economic development?
- Are there opportunities for coordinating/streamlining local business permitting?
- What are your overall observations on economic development in the region?
- How can the strategic plan support the most critical needs?

Education-Workforce Partnerships

Purpose: *To determine options for how the region can support excellence in K-12 and higher education to meet the needs of employers.*

Sample Questions

- Are there opportunities for the region's business community to become more involved in public education to improve student preparedness beyond high school?
 - What can be done to improve access to higher education in the region?
 - How well do the region's institutions engage private employers?
 - What are your overall observations on economic development in the region?
 - What steps are being taken – by employers, education & training providers, community organizations – to address existing or anticipated skills gaps?
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Community Outreach – Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Purpose: *To ensure the diverse needs of the region's various communities are addressed through economic development.*

Sample Questions

- Do the region's current economic development entities actively engage your community?
- Do you feel the voice of your community is heard by the region's economic development entities?
- What actions can the region's economic development entities do to support your community?
- How can the unique attributes of your community be leveraged to promote economic development in the region?
- Are there strategies the region can pursue to promote talent attraction within your community?
- What are your overall observations on economic development in the region?
- How can the strategic plan support the most critical needs?

Emerging Employment Districts (Real Estate, Developers)

Purpose: *To identify specific areas within the region that should be targeted for increased development as a means for job creation.*

Sample Questions

- Where would you like to see new development occurring in the region for various types of uses?
 - Office
 - Industrial
 - Warehousing & logistics
 - What are the impediments to new development in those areas?
 - What policies could the region and local jurisdictions pursue to promote development in those areas?
 - What are the types of businesses that should be pursued for these developments?
 - What are your overall observations on economic development in the region?
 - How can the strategic plan support the most critical needs?
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Private Sector Leaders

Purpose: To understand the needs of the business community and any challenges and opportunities.

Sample Questions

- What are the region's strengths in terms of its business climate?
- What are its weaknesses?
- Where are most of your customers?
- Where are most of your suppliers?
- What about Eastern Michigan's location is advantageous to your business?
- What poses an obstacle?
- How would you rate the workforce in the region in terms of skills, availability, and cost?
- Can you grow your business in the region?
- Have you been contacted as part of a Business Retention & Expansion program? If so, tell us about the experience / interaction.

Broader Community/Stakeholders

Purpose: To understand the needs of the community, as well as challenges and opportunities.

Sample Questions

- What are the region's strengths in terms of its quality of life and livability?
 - What are its weaknesses?
 - What are the biggest opportunities for the region?
 - What are the biggest challenges?
 - Looking ahead 10 years, where would you like to see the region?
 - What opportunities do you see for the business community and future jobs in the region?
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