

Regional Prosperity Plan

for the

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance

October 10, 2014

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance
Steering Committee
October 10, 2014
12:00 p.m.

A MOTION WAS MADE by Jim Fisher to approve the *Regional Prosperity Plan for the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance*. **SUPPORTED BY** Andy Johnston.
Motion Approved Unanimously.

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INTRODUCTION

Michigan’s Regional Prosperity Initiative (Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget)

Michigan has earned the title of America’s comeback state. It’s an economic success story that would not be possible without collaboration by the public, private and nonprofit sectors. Our shared accomplishments during the past two years underscore the need to work in partnership toward a common vision of economic prosperity. That’s the goal of Gov. Rick Snyder’s Regional Reinvention Initiative.

While Michigan’s future is bright, our job creators, local governments and nonprofit leadership face stiff global competition. We must recognize that the world does not simply identify with local units of government, individual counties or even the entire state of Michigan. It is the uniqueness of our regions – Greater Detroit, the Traverse City region, the West Michigan shoreline, the magnificence of the Upper Peninsula and similar corridors throughout our state – that makes the world take notice. These regions drive Michigan’s economy and define its character.

Michigan has numerous regional entities, including regional planning and development organizations, metropolitan planning organizations and workforce boards. Unfortunately, they were designed in such a way that results in overlapping goals and competing priorities. Where local and regional collaboration is occurring, it often is cumbersome and is happening in spite of a structure that seems designed to dissuade it. Michigan needs to provide a structure that supports and encourages collaboration rather than discourages it.

A comprehensive economic development strategy can only be realized when leaders in the business development, talent development and infrastructure development communities unite in a common vision and strategy. Currently, each of these systems is struggling with a decrease in federal funding. This demands that the state and our regional providers break from the business-as-usual approach to ensure that the available resources have the greatest impact possible for job creators and residents. No one is more aware of the challenges that lie ahead than the men and women who provide these critical services every day. The governor’s Regional Prosperity Initiative is based on the principle that local citizens and their leaders – not Lansing – are best suited to determine the future of local and regional economies. It rejects the one-size-fits-all economic model and instead provides resources for local private, public and nonprofit leaders to successfully determine where they want to go and what steps they can take together to get there.

It’s time to unleash the energy and innovation that abound across our state. Stronger local and regional collaboration will drive economic investment, lead to greater quality of place and increase business and talent attraction. As we continue to reinvent Michigan, we must empower our local leaders to drive economic prosperity through collaboration.

What is the Regional Prosperity Initiative? The Regional Prosperity Initiative is a voluntary competitive grant process that is included in the Governor’s FY 2014 Executive Budget Recommendation to encourage local private, public and non-profit partners to create vibrant regional economies. The legislature approved the recommended process and the Regional Prosperity Initiative was signed into law as a part of the FY 2014 budget (59 PA 2013).

Who is eligible to apply for grants under the Regional Prosperity Initiative? Existing State Designated Planning Regions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations are eligible to apply for grants from the Regional Prosperity Initiative. However, they will not qualify for any funding at any level unless they are collaborating with business and non-profit representatives as well as representatives from local and regional economic development organizations, workforce boards, adult education providers and the higher education community.

Why do we need a formal mechanism for regional collaboration? Why is it important? As it stands today, many of Michigan’s regions and their various public planning and service delivery entities have overlapping responsibilities yet competing visions for their economic priorities. The absence of a broad based regional vision and coordination of services create both redundancies and gaps. This creates confusion for local, state, federal, private and non-profit partners seeking to invest in a region’s success. Formalizing a collaborative relationship among local and regional partners will allow the state, as well as private and non-profit stakeholders, to recognize local efforts and work in closer collaboration with local and regional decision makers throughout the state to support their efforts for economic prosperity.

How will local governments benefit from the Regional Prosperity Initiative? Currently, state officials in Lansing are tasked with trying to decipher what is in the best economic interest of Michigan’s regions. The Regional Prosperity Initiative empowers local governments within a region to better determine and affect the factors that drive economic prosperity. This initiative recognizes that local partners, who are well-informed and well-resourced, are in a better position to make those decisions and creates the opportunity for them to do so. This formal regional collaboration also provides opportunity for shared service delivery and technical assistance for local communities from their regions. In addition, by creating a strong regional strategy for economic prosperity, local partners will be better able to compete locally in an increasingly global economy.

How will the State of Michigan benefit from the Regional Prosperity Initiative?

The Regional Prosperity Initiative will ensure that the State of Michigan is investing in the success of our regions, their local communities, and our economy in ways that are meaningful to the people who are working, playing and doing business there every day. This will ensure that our finite resources are being used wisely. As a result of collaborative efforts for regional prosperity, the state will also be better equipped to attract and retain talent that is so essential to remaining globally competitive. Finally, strong regions will give the state a new avenue by which to deliver state services that is more efficient and responsive to the needs of the regional economy.

How will the Federal government benefit from the Regional Prosperity Initiative?

As federal dollars become scarcer, our federal partners are looking for innovative states that can demonstrate collaborative efforts which are producing positive outcomes. Partners in this initiative will be at the forefront nationally, demonstrating the ability to leverage various resources for a comprehensive economic strategy.

How will these regions ensure transparency and accountability? All participating applicants, as public bodies, will be subject to standard transparency and accountability requirements including the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. Federal requirements for many of the eligible regional entities also require that they be governed by persons who are appointed by local public officials. This adds an additional element of accountability to the Regional Prosperity Initiative.

How will the progress and success of the regions be measured and reported?

Participating regions will be required to publicly post meeting materials and track progress through a publicly available dashboard that displays measurable annual goals. Grants awarded as part of the Regional Prosperity Initiative will be evaluated annually, contingent with the budget process. Metrics that are locally decided and collaboratively developed will be available to ensure accountability and document progress.

How are the Regional Prosperity Initiative and the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) different?

The Regional Prosperity Initiative is aimed at empowering local and regional partners to develop a consensus vision and implementation plan for economic prosperity. EVIP is designed to allow and incent local governments to engage in collaborative efforts that will provide services in the most effective and efficient way possible. The purpose of the Regional Prosperity Initiative is much broader and focuses on economic prosperity through coordinated economic, talent and infrastructure strategies that are targeted, deliberate and ongoing. It is also important to note that none of the eligible applicants for the Regional Prosperity Initiative qualify for EVIP funding.

Is the Regional Prosperity Initiative a state mandate?

No. The proposed Regional Prosperity Initiative is voluntary. We all benefit when local and regional partners work in close collaboration toward a shared vision of economic prosperity. The Regional Prosperity Initiative is intended to provide resources to regions to empower and encourage them to do just that.

Do the requirements of the Regional Prosperity Initiative conflict with any federal program requirements?

No. The proposed Regional Prosperity Initiative actually requires that regions meet all pertinent federal program requirements currently required of each partner entity, including those required by the Economic Development Administration, Department of Transportation and Department of Labor. Better regional collaboration of federally required efforts will help partners leverage the resources available to complete this work in a way that is most beneficial for the region's purposes.

Does the Regional Prosperity Initiative require the structure for collaboration to be uniform across regions? Will all regions receive the same funding?

No. The Regional Prosperity Initiative seeks to recognize the unique needs and assets of all of our regions and avoids a “one-size fits all” approach. Regions that choose to participate in the Regional Prosperity Initiative have three options for participation with different accompanying funding levels that are outlined in the chart below:

	Collaborative	Council	Board
Funding	Up to \$250,000	Up to \$375,000	Up to \$500,000
Eligible Applicants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State Designated Planning Regions ■ Metropolitan Planning Organizations 		
Regional Structure Description	A Regional Prosperity Collaborative is any committee currently existing or developed by a regional planning organization which serves to bring organizational representation together among the required participants (see below) from within a region for the purpose of creating a regional prosperity plan.	A Regional Prosperity Council has shared administrative services and an executive governing entity, as demonstrated by a formal local agreement(s)	A Regional Prosperity Board, at a minimum, must demonstrate the consolidation of regional metropolitan planning organization board(s), state designated regional planning agency board(s), workforce development board(s), and federally designated economic development district(s).
Required Participants	Regional private, public and non-profit representatives from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adult education ■ Workforce development ■ Economic development ■ Transportation ■ Higher education organizations 		
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A 5 year regional prosperity plan, including an economic development blueprint; and ■ A performance dashboard and measurable annual goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A status report of the approved five-year plan ■ A ten-year regional prosperity plan, including an economic development blueprint; and ■ A performance dashboard with measurable annual goals ■ A prioritized list of regional projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A status report of the approved ten-year plan ■ Including a state report of the approved performance dashboard and measurable annual goals ■ A regional services recommendations report outlining the prioritized list of state funded services and programs provided to the region and recommendations for state-regional partnerships to support the adopted 10 year plan
Additional Structural Requirements		The council shall identify additional opportunities for shared administrative services and decision-making among the private, public and non-profit entities within the region	The board, at a minimum, must demonstrate the consolidation of regional metropolitan planning organization board(s), state designated regional planning agency board(s), workforce development board(s), and federally designated economic development district

Executive Summary

The following provides a summary of the goals and projects generated by this planning process. Additional information for each of the goals and projects is included in the appropriate sections of this Regional Prosperity Plan.

Organizational Goals – The following five goals identify goals related to the organizational structure of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA). Since the WMPA is a newly formed organization, it is important to identify some goals related to how it will function in the near future.

Goal #1 – The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance will continue to facilitate the collaboration of community and economic development, education and training, and other related agencies.

Goal #2 – Maintain an up-to-date list of potential projects needed to promote prosperity across West Michigan.

Goal #3 – Develop and maintain an up-to-date set of goals that serve the entire Prosperity Region.

Goal #4 – Utilize the WMPA as a tool to grow leadership opportunities and relationships between public and private organizations.

Goal #5 – Build and promote the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance in a manner that encourages collaboration without the need for additional administrative layers or organizations.

Regional Goals – The following five goals identify goals related to communities and organizations located within the 13 county region served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance.

Goal #1 – The Region will strive to address economic distress for the entire population.

Goal #2 – Promote lifelong learning in West Michigan using the public and private K-12 systems, Intermediate School Districts, colleges and universities, workforce development agencies, and private businesses.

Goal #3 – The Region will preserve and enhance its natural resources.

Goal #4 – Promote the efficient maintenance and improvements of West Michigan’s public assets.

Goal #5 – West Michigan will strive to create a sustainable approach to collaboration.

Projects – The WMPA Steering Committee solicited projects from across the 13-county region after developing a project solicitation sheet and criteria for evaluating the submitted projects. The criteria focus on long-term impact and sustainability, regional impact, employment opportunities, recognizing the region’s strengths and weaknesses, and supporting public-private partnerships.

A total of 31 projects were submitted. The projects were then presented in a similar format (each limited to 200 word descriptions) and were then divided by the Prosperity Plan Committee and the

three officers of the Steering Committee into three tiers. The first tier of projects will be the focus of the Regional Prosperity Plan during year-two of the program. The Prosperity Plan Committee will gather additional information for each of the projects and work to expand collaboration in order to move the projects forward. The second and third tier projects are also included in the Prosperity Plan and will receive recommendations for how to strengthen the projects to meet the needs of the 13-county region. The following is the list of Tier One Projects:

Connected Community Engagement Program, Technology Action Planning – submitted by Connect Michigan: Implement the Connected Community Engagement program to address local broadband and technology issues, help accelerate broadband expansion, and establish a broadband planning process throughout the region.

Emerge Regional Website Portal – submitted by Emerge: The Emerge portal allows entrepreneurs to identify partner organizations that provide the assistance they need. Once they've engaged with a partner for help, the Emerge portal will track their progression to ensure they receive the necessary support for their start-up activity.

Protecting Lake Michigan Water Quality through Establishment of a Dedicated Revenue Stream for Watershed Management – submitted by Macatawa Area Coordinating Council: This proposal establishes sustainable financial resources to protect Lake Michigan's water quality. Funding would be distributed to local watershed organizations working under federally approved watershed management plans.

Michigan Works Strategic Redesign – submitted by Muskegon Michigan Works: Michigan Works! Region 4 desires to provide local employers with more work/skill ready employees. With the engagement of a design thinking firm, that focuses on Human Centered Design, it will help us understand the talent needs and why many job seekers fall short of employer expectations.

Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub – submitted by West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission: A group of public and private community leaders are working to further the development of the Muskegon Port as a logistic hub and an economic asset. The Muskegon Port is serviced by a variety of multi-model assets including truck routes, rail access points, and airports.

Michigan Work Ready Communities – submitted by Talent 2025: This initiative will match the needs of employers in industry sectors, represented in the region, to the skills and expertise of potential employees. By having a standardized certification requirement for the region, employers will have tools to better ensure suitability and retention of talent.

Prosperity in West Michigan

Defining “prosperity” in West Michigan is the equivalent of creating a “vision statement” in a more traditional planning process. While West Michigan tends to fare better than the State of Michigan as-a-whole, there is always room for improvement and the fact that West Michigan tends to perform better than Michigan does not account for why several parts of West Michigan continue to struggle with higher unemployment and poverty rates. The following statement serves as a vision for the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance and the definition of prosperity in West Michigan.

West Michigan’s residents enjoy a quality of life that includes measurable features, but also includes assets that cannot be measured with numbers and lists. The population continues to grow due to the Region’s quality of life, thriving economy, and attractiveness to a diverse and well-educated population. Unemployment rates across the Region are lower than Michigan’s and median incomes are higher. Residents have appropriate degrees and training to match the needs of employers, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning and advancement. West Michigan has a diverse population that includes all ages and cultures.

Communities and their public facilities are well-maintained and receive a sustainable level of local, state, federal, and private support. Communities receive adequate funding to maintain facilities and programs that promote a quality of life that residents and businesses desire. In West Michigan, collaboration and cooperation between governmental units and others is the accepted way of providing the highest level of services in a sustainable manner.

The success of business and industry is essential to West Michigan’s prosperity. Not only does West Michigan provide a competitive environment for businesses to financially succeed, but the quality of life is so high that business leaders want to live and locate their businesses in the Region. Additionally, the quality of workers and the entrepreneurial spirit of West Michigan make the Region a natural fit for successful businesses. West Michigan’s diverse economy secures the Region’s future – manufacturing a range of products from automotive parts to food products helps West Michigan avoid the peaks and valleys often associated with manufacturing. In addition to manufacturing, the area has a complete range of employment opportunities that include health care, finance and business, education, tourism, retail, agriculture, natural resources, public service, and many others.

West Michigan is a very affordable place to live. A combination of above average household incomes, a range of well-maintained housing types, short commute times to employment opportunities and services, and a range of transit options contribute to the Region’s affordability.

Education’s role in the Region’s prosperity is essential. Public and private opportunities exist from pre-school through college with lifelong learning opportunities in-place to meet the needs of residents and employers. Public schools receive community and state support and prepare students for a range of opportunities from jobs to higher education. Adult education from

certificates to a full range of college degrees is available throughout the Region for the Region's residents and to people from outside the Region interested in obtaining an affordable and high-quality education. Programs are in-place to make staying in West Michigan attractive.

Finally, individuals have regular opportunities to enjoy West Michigan's natural and cultural resources to lead a well-rounded life. Recreational opportunities include local parks, state parks, a network of trails, state and federal game areas, Lake Michigan, inland lakes, rivers, and other outdoor opportunities exist across the Region and provide year-round pleasure to residents and visitors. Entertainment districts, thriving downtowns, museums, cultural events and activities, festivals, and other attractions also provide recreational opportunities and keep people living and working in West Michigan.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA)

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance is not a formal organization with any staff or physical presence, but is an alliance of public and non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals representing a variety of interests and dedicated to making West Michigan a better place through enhanced communication and collaboration.

Michigan’s 2014 Budget included funds for Michigan’s ten identified “Prosperity Regions” to apply for to develop Prosperity Plans. In Region 4, there were four eligible applicants for these funds: The West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council, and the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council. These four organizations sat down together and decided that all four of the organizations would be essential for the successful application and implementation of the program, but chose the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council to be the lead applicant and fiduciary of the grant. An application for \$250,000 was assembled and submitted to the State of Michigan – and was approved January 1, 2014.

Work began prior to grant approval. The “full” West Michigan Prosperity Alliance had met once prior to the grant approval, the eligible applicants had met many times, and the selection of the 25 person steering committee was performed by the various sectors involved in the Regional Prosperity Initiative. The Steering Committee was in-place and ready to move forward before the application was approved. The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance is a much larger and fluid group of people and organizations (public, non-profit, and private sectors) that was involved throughout the process, meeting every three months during the first year (January through September 2014).

WMPA Steering Committee

The 25-person WMPA Steering Committee was selected by the various organizations. The Steering Committee is not intended to represent the geographic distribution of the 13-County alliance, but instead represents the disciplines included in the Regional Prosperity Initiative. The following people serve on the WMPA Steering Committee.

John Weiss (Chair), Grand Valley Metro Council
Jacob Maas (Vice Chair), Kent-Allegan Michigan Works
Debbie Groeneveld (Secretary), Muskegon-Oceana Michigan Works
Bruce Adair, Lakeshore Advantage
Dave Bee, West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
Linda Brand, Model Communities Initiative
Steve Bulthuis, Macatawa Area Coordinating

Simone Jonaitis, Grand Valley State University
Erin Kuhn, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
Ed Garner, Muskegon Area First
Fiona Hert, Grand Rapids Community College
Michael O’Conner, Holland/Zeeland Adult Education
Bill Raymond, Ottawa County Michigan Works
Dan Rinsema-Sybenga, Muskegon Community College

Council

Valerie Byrnes, Barry County
Economic Development Alliance

Rick Chapla, The Right Place

Jim Fisher, PADNOS

Paul Griffith, Michigan Works West Central

Andy Johnston, West Michigan Chamber Alliance

Roger Safford, Michigan Department
of Transportation

Jim Sandy, Mecosta County Development
Corporation

Kevin Stotts, Talent 2025

Kathleen Sullivan, Consultant

Lynda Matson, West Shore Community College

Doug Wood, Orchard View Public Schools

WMPA Sub-Committees

At its first formal meeting in January 2014, the WMPA Steering Committee selected officers and established four sub-committees. Details of each of the sub-committees follow.

Public Communications Committee – This sub-committee is comprised of the following people:

- Rick Chapla, Chair
- Valarie Byrnes
- Dan Rinsema-Sybenga
- John Weiss
- Doug Wood

This Committee's responsibilities include relaying information about the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance to the general public as well as communities, organizations, and businesses in West Michigan. The Committee met monthly and coordinated public relations and communications.

Alliance Communications Committee – This sub-committee is comprised of the following people:

- Ed Garner, Chair
- Dave Bee
- Valarie Byrnes
- Paul Griffith
- Bill Raymond
- Kevin Stotts
- Kathleen Sullivan
- Lynda Matson

This Committee's responsibilities include coordinating communications within the WMPA and Steering Committee as well as assisting with tracking progress.

Prosperity Plan Committee – This sub-committee is comprised of the following people:

- Dave Bee, Co-Chair
- Erin Kuhn, Co-Chair
- Bruce Adair
- Steve Bulthuis
- Linda Brand
- Fiona Hert
- Michael O'Connor

This Committee's responsibilities include developing an outline for the Regional Prosperity Plan, gathering information, performing a SWOT Analysis, developing criteria for evaluating projects, soliciting and ranking projects, and synthesizing information from a variety of sources for inclusion in the Regional Prosperity Plan.

General Session Committee – This sub-committee is comprised of the following people:

- John Weiss, Chair
- Rick Chapla
- Jim Fisher
- Deborah Groeneveld
- Andy Johnston
- Simone Jonaitis
- Jacob Maas
- Jim Sandy
- Roger Safford

This Committee's responsibilities include the task of organizing three large meetings of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance as well as meetings of the Steering Committee.

Planning Process

There are two planning processes identified in this Regional Prosperity Plan. A summary of the application for the entire West Michigan Prosperity Initiative and a work program for developing the Regional Prosperity Plan by the Prosperity Plan Committee.

West Michigan Prosperity Initiative – The following is a summary of the planning process identified in the grant application forwarded to the State of Michigan in October 2013.

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance applied for (and received) \$250,000 to undertake the goals of the Regional Prosperity Initiative. The following actions were included in the application:

- Creating the structure & dashboard for the organization so that it can sustainably work towards its goals
- Create communications architecture, including regional meetings & presentations

- Conduct an environmental scan of work already being done/existing collaborations, analyze and benchmark
- Develop five regional economic prosperity initiatives through the efforts of three regional stakeholder sessions involving 150 – 200 people
- Determine funding for five initiatives

The following identifies how funds would be distributed to complete the goals of the Regional Prosperity Initiative:

- Grant Administration – 10 percent (\$25,000)
- Plan Architecture, Consultant, Meetings, Economic Analysis, Goals & Dashboard 50 percent (\$125,000)
- Organizational Development / Communications Strategy – 40 percent (\$100,000)

The following identifies the schedule for completing the required actions:

November 1, 2013- Application Due Date

November 2-December 31, 2013- Creation of 25 Person Steering Committee

- Election of Sector Representatives
- Nominations of At-Large Members
- Develop 1st Steering Committee Agenda
- Create Contact List for Regional Prosperity Alliance (estimated 200 participants)

January 2014 - Award of Grant

January-March 2014- Monthly Steering Committee Meetings (*All Monthly Steering Committee Meetings will be followed by both Dashboard Updates and a Regional Prosperity Update Newsletter*)

- Election of At-Large Members and Officers
- Establish Future Meeting Dates and locations
- Steering Committee Goals and Objectives
- Begin Work on Long-Term Communications Strategy
- Plan the Plan –Determine Process and Outcomes for 5 year Prosperity Plan
- Determine Need to Retain Outside Consultants, Facilitators, etc.
- Develop Agenda for First Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session
- Develop Public Communications Framework and Dashboard
- Begin Development of the Five Year Prosperity Plan including Regional Economic Analysis

Conduct First Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session-March 2014

- Introduction of All Partner Organizations
- Presentation by Host Community
- Update from Steering Committee of Progress on Communications Strategy and 5 Year Prosperity Plan

- Discussion of Criteria for Projects of Regional Economic Significance

April-June 2014-Monthly Steering Committee Meetings (*All Monthly Steering Committee Meetings will be followed by both Dashboard Updates and a Regional Prosperity Update Newsletter*)

- Further Develop Permanent Communications Strategy and Methods
- Further Refine Goals and Objectives
- Analyze Results of First Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session
- Plan Second Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session
- Develop Strategy for Long-Term Program Sustainability
- Further Develop Regional Analysis and Formulate Economic Development Goals and Objectives

Conduct Second Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session-June 2014

- Introduction of All Partner Organizations
- Presentation by Host Community
- Update from Steering Committee of Progress on Communications Strategy and 5 Year Prosperity Plan.
- Create Shortlist of Projects of Regional Economic Significance

July-September 2014- Monthly Steering Committee Meetings (*All Monthly Steering Committee Meetings will be followed by both Dashboard Updates and a Regional Prosperity Update Newsletter*)

- Prepare Final Permanent Communications Strategy and Methods
- Prepare for Third Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session
- Analyze Results of Second Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session

Conduct Third Regional Prosperity Alliance General Session-September 2014

- Introduction of All Partner Organizations
- Presentation by Host Community
- Present for Approval the 5 Year Regional Prosperity Plan
- Present for Selection and the Approval the Projects of Regional Economic Significance
- Evaluation of Process and Feedback

October-December 2014- Monthly Steering Committee Meetings (*All Monthly Steering Committee Meetings will be followed by both Dashboard Updates and a Regional Prosperity Update Newsletter*)

- Analyze Results of Feedback and Evaluation Tools
- Make Adjustments to the Steering Committee and Process as Necessary
- Take Actions Necessary to facilitate long-term financial, communication and regional participation and sustainability
- Plan the New Plan for 2014

Regional Prosperity Plan – The following information was used to guide the development of the Regional Prosperity Plan:

Action	Action Items	Primary Responsible Organization	Hours/Budget
1.	Organizational – Develop text for the RPP including the Introduction, and Organization and Management sections. This Action Item should be accomplished by March 15, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC	50/ \$2,500
2.	Criteria – Develop Draft Criteria for WMPA consideration for choosing and prioritizing projects. This Action Item should be accomplished by March 15, 2014, and will be used in Action 6.	WMRPC WMSRDC	50/ \$2,500
3.	WMPA Partners – Gather information and develop text that describes the role and capacity of the Regional Planning Agencies, Metropolitan Planning Organization, Economic Development Agencies, Work Force Development Agencies, and Adult/Higher Education Organizations. This Action Item should be accomplished by April 30, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC	100/ \$5,000
4.	Regional Profile – Gather information and develop text of the physical and human resources within the 13-County Region. The profile will focus on the Region as-a-whole in order to present a unified discussion of the Region. This Action Item should be accomplished by June 1, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC	200/ \$10,000
5.	SWOT Analysis – Interview each of the Steering Committee Members and provide a survey to an additional 30-50 organizations and individuals to develop a list of the Region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This Action Item should be accomplished by June 1, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC SC	200/ \$10,000
6.	Issues, Goals, Objectives, and Actions – Using input from the Steering Committee, the SWOT Analysis, and other information, two sets of issues, goals, objectives, and actions will be developed: one related to WMPA Partners and another related to the Region. This Action Item should be accomplished by July 1, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC PPC	200/ \$10,000
7.	Develop Projects – This process will include using evaluation criteria developed in Action Item 2, soliciting projects, identifying and ranking projects, and detailing each of the projects (schedules, descriptions, funding opportunities, etc.). This Action Item should be accomplished by August 1, 2014.	WMRPC WMSRDC PPC SC WMPA	250/ \$15,000
8.	Next Steps and Conclusions – Plan wrap-up, adoption, and printing will be accomplished by September 30, 2014.	WMRPC, WMSRDC, PC, SC, WMPA	100/ \$5,000
	Total (1,150 hours)		\$57,500

WMRPC – West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
WMSRDC – West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
PPC – Prosperity Plan Committee
SC – Steering Committee
WMPA – West Michigan Prosperity Alliance

Schedule

Action	1-2014	2-2014	3-2014	4-2014	5-2014	6-2014	7-2014	8-2014	9-2014
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P – Public Stakeholder Meeting

WMPA PARTNERS

Regional Planning Agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Grand Valley Metro Council – Serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Kent County and eastern Ottawa County. In addition to its transportation role, GVMC has an Environmental Division, a Regional GIS Department (REGIS), and serves a role in coordinating efforts between communities in Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, and Ottawa Counties. The mission of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council is to advance the current and future well-being of our metropolitan area by bringing together public and private sectors to cooperatively advocate, plan for, and coordinate the provision of services and investments which have environmental, economic and social impact.

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
678 Front Ave NW, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504
Telephone: (616) 776-3876
Executive Director: John Weiss

Macatawa Area Coordinating Council – Serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the cities of Holland and Zeeland and the surrounding seven townships. In addition to its transportation role, MACC focuses on watershed issues, and serves a role in coordinating efforts between its communities. The Macatawa Area Coordinating Council encourages cooperation among neighboring units of government on area-wide issues.

Macatawa Area Coordinating Council
301 Douglas Avenue
Holland, MI 49424
Telephone: (616) 395-2688
Executive Director: Steve Bulthuis

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission – Serves as the Economic Development District for the U.S. Economic Development Administration for the counties of Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, Osceola, and Ottawa. Barry County is in the process of aligning with the WMRPC. In addition to its community development role, the WMRPC also provides rural transportation planning services and works closely with the Michigan Department of Transportation. Community Planning services are also provided. The mission of the WMRPC is to assist planning efforts in community and economic development, provide a regional forum for sharing information and ideas, and promote cooperative solutions to regional issues.

West Michigan Regional Planning Commission
820 Monroe NW, Suite 214
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone: (616) 774-8400
Director: Dave Bee

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission – Serves as the Economic Development District for the U.S. Economic Development Administration for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. In addition to its community development role, WMSRDC also provides rural transportation planning services and works closely with the Michigan Department of Transportation and serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Muskegon County and northern Ottawa County. WMSRDC also has a strong environmental program and administers the Homeland Security Program. Community Planning services are also provided. WMSRDC’s mission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340
Muskegon, Michigan 49440
Telephone: (231) 722-7878
Executive Director: Erin Kuhn

Economic Development Organizations

Lakeshore Advantage – Lakeshore Advantage is a non-profit organization that works within the community to leverage the strengths of West Michigan. Lakeshore Advantage works to attract new businesses and encourage growth in existing companies. Lakeshore Advantage is a catalyst for bringing together the intellectual, operational and developmental resources that aid in the growth of existing companies and start-ups alike. Lakeshore advantage has experienced professionals in three segments that service unique needs businesses and entrepreneurs face. These groups include Business Services Group for growing and keeping businesses along the Lakeshore, New Venture Group that assists entrepreneurs with new and emerging businesses and the Innovation Group to help foster creativity that invigorates businesses and encourages new ways of thinking. The Board of Directors is comprised of leaders from both the private and public sectors. Likewise, the eight-person staff consists of business innovators with decades of experience in a variety of industries.

Lakeshore Advantage
201. W. Washington Ave. Loft 410
Zeeland, Michigan 49464
Telephone: (616) 772-5226
President: Jennifer Owens

Muskegon Area First – Muskegon Area First is a countywide economic development corporation focused on leveraging public and private investment to accelerate business growth and the creation of high-quality employment opportunities in Muskegon County. Founded in 1999 by area business and governmental leaders, Muskegon Area First is the lead agency for economic development projects in the area. Muskegon Area First performs a variety of tasks including business expansion assistance, site location assistance, coordination of economic development incentives, infrastructure development, project financing assistance, brownfield redevelopment, coordination with state and

local government, workforce development assistance, customized demographic and labor market information, and development of industry councils and roundtables. The Board of Directors of Muskegon Area First is a blend of local governmental leaders, labor, and major utilities and private industry through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. This group also provides the financial resources for the organization to operate. A six-person staff carries out the mission Muskegon Area First.

Muskegon Area First
380 W. Western, Suite 202,
Muskegon, MI 49440
Telephone: (231) 722-3751
President & CEO: Ed Garner

The Right Place – Since its beginning, The Right Place has assisted thousands of West Michigan companies, to invest more than \$3 billion in capital and create more than 40,000 jobs. Serving West Michigan since 1985, The Right Place, Inc. is a regional non-profit economic development organization supported through investments from the private and public sector. The Right Place drives regional Economic Development initiatives to stimulate economic growth, wealth creation, and operational excellence by focusing on productivity, innovation, and the retention and creation of quality employment in the West Michigan community.

Staffed by a team of economic development and business professionals with more than 150 years of combined experience, The Right Place concentrates on the following strategic priorities: Leading West Michigan business development efforts, Identifying and developing emerging growth opportunities, and Strengthening the global competitiveness and innovation of our existing regional manufacturers.

The Right Place
161 Ottawa Ave NW, Suite 400
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone: (616)771-0325
President & CEO: Birgit Klohs

County and Community Economic Development – In addition to the regional economic development agencies, each of the counties, and many of the communities within the WMPA Region, maintain economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, and other types of organizations promoting West Michigan.

Adult Education and Higher Education

Intermediate School Districts – Intermediate School Districts and Educational Service Agencies provide many educational opportunities for the 13 counties of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance.

Allegan Area Educational Service Agency

310 Thomas Street
Allegan, Michigan 49010
(269) 673-2161

Barry Intermediate School District

535 W. Woodlawn Avenue
Hastings Michigan 49058
(269) 945-9545

Ionia County Intermediate School District

2191 Harwood Road
Ionia, Michigan 48846
(616) 527-4900

Kent Intermediate School District

2930 Knapp Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49525
(616) 364-1333

Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District

15760 190th Avenue
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
(231) 796-3543

Montcalm Area Intermediate School District

621 New Street, PO Box 367
Stanton, Michigan 48888
Telephone: (989) 831-5261

Muskegon Area Intermediate School District

630 Harvey Street
Muskegon, Michigan 49442
Telephone: (231) 767-7201

Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency

4747 W. 48th Street
Fremont, Michigan 49412
Telephone: (231) 924-0381

Ottawa Area Intermediate School District

13565 Port Sheldon Street
Holland, Michigan 49424
Telephone: (616) 738-8940

West Shore Educational Service District

2130 U.S. 10
Ludington, Michigan 49431
Telephone: (231) 757-3716

Wexford Missaukee Intermediate School District

9907 E. 13th Street
Cadillac, Michigan 49601
Telephone: (231) 876-2260

There are several areas around the 13 County area served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance that are located in other districts, but the 11 identified here are the primary providers.

Adult Education – There are many adult education providers across the region. The following list identifies the school districts with adult education programs along with contact people and email addresses.

Allegan Public Schools
Brenda Nyhof
bnyhof@alleganps.org

Belding Public Schools
Adrienne Barna
barnaa@bas-k12.org

Carson City-Crystal Area Schools
Jan Ellis
jellis@ccschools.org

Central Montcalm Public Schools
Cindy Shick
cshick@cms.maisd.com

Ewart Public Schools
Jason O'Dell
odellj@ewart.k12.mi.us

Fremont Public Schools
Tracy Sanchez
tsanchez@fremont.net

Fruitport Adult Education
Brenda Baker
bbaker@fruitportschools.net

Godfrey Lee Public Schools
Mark Provost
mprovost@godfrey-lee.org

Grand Rapids Public Schools

Esther Kuiper
kuipere@grps.org

Hesperia Community Schools

David Outwin
outwind@hesp.net

North Muskegon Public Schools

Curt Babcock
babcoccu@nmpls.k12.mi.us

Orchard View Schools

Stephanie Dodd-Larson
stephanie.larson@orchardview.org

Plainwell Public Schools

Melissa Gelbaugh
mgelbaugh@plainwellschools.org

Rockford Public Schools

Lisa Jacobs
ljacobs@rockfordschools.org

Whitehall District Schools

Joel Hoppa
joelhoppa@wlace.org

Zeeland Public Schools

Mike O'Connor
moconnor@zps.org

Grant Public Schools

Joe Schuitema
joes@grantps.net

Mason County Central

Kris Courtland-Willick
kwillick@mccschools.org

Oakridge Public Schools

Ken Johnson
kjohnsto@oakridgeschools.org

Otsego Public Schools

Heather Kortlandt
hkortlandt@otsegops.org

Portland Public Schools

Scott Brown
sbrown@portlandk12.org

Sparta Area Schools

Jennifer Grimm
jennifer.grimm@spartaschools.org

Wyoming Public Schools

Adrian LaMar
lamaro@wyomingps.org

Colleges and Universities – The 13 Counties served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance have many public and private colleges and universities to meet the needs of the area (and beyond). For the sake of brevity, only public colleges and universities are listed in this plan.

Ferris State University

Ferris State University's main campus is located in Big Rapids, Michigan. FSU also has a large presence in Grand Rapids as well as satellite campuses in Greenville/Sidney, and Muskegon. FSU offers Associates, Bachelors, and Masters degrees to its 14,500 students. FSU also offers Doctorate degrees in Pharmacy, Optometry, and Education in Community College Leadership.

Grand Valley State University

Grand Valley State University's main campus is located in Allendale, Michigan. GVSU also has a large campus and other facilities in Grand Rapids as well as satellite campuses in Holland and Muskegon. GVSU offers Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees to its 24,500 students.

Michigan State University

Michigan State University's main campus is located in East Lansing, Michigan (outside of the area served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance). MSU's College of Human Medicine is located in Grand Rapids and there are satellite campuses across Michigan. MSU offers Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees to its 49,300 students.

Western Michigan University

Western Michigan University's main campus is located in Kalamazoo, Michigan (outside of the area served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance). WMU has campuses in Grand Rapids and Muskegon. WMU offers Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate degrees to its 24,300 students.

Grand Rapids Community College

Grand Rapids Community College's main campus is located in Grand Rapids, but there are also campus facilities in Holland. The college offers Associates degrees and a variety of certificates.

Muskegon Community College

Muskegon Community College's main campus is located in Muskegon, Michigan, but there are also campus facilities in Fremont, Whitehall, Newaygo, and Grand Haven. The college offers Associates degrees and a variety of certificates.

Montcalm Community College

Montcalm Community College's main campus is located in Sidney, Michigan, but there are also campus facilities in Greenville, Ionia, and Howard City. Classes are also offered at The Stream in Newaygo. The college offers Associates degrees and a variety of certificates.

West Shore Community College

West Shore Community College's main campus is Mason County, near Ludington, Michigan. The college offers Associates degrees and a variety of certificates.

Workforce Development

Twenty-four Michigan Works! Agencies oversee local Michigan Works! Service Centers, where job seekers and employers can access services. Most counties have at least one Service Center. The Michigan Works! System is on the front lines meeting the talent demands of local employers, and ready to respond to the unique needs of each community. The System is made-up of 24 regional

Michigan Works! Agencies, focusing on the needs of job makers and developing talent for the 21st Century economy.

While each agency is unique, all share several fundamental qualities:

- Locally-responsive and demand-driven
- Governed by a Workforce Development Board comprised of private sector representatives and Local Elected Officials
- Provide services to help businesses find the skilled workers they need, and provide a competitive advantage for job seekers

Michigan Works! partners with community partners to meet the diverse needs of all customers. All ages, all skill sets and all levels of experience are welcome. The following provides the contact information for where the administrative offices are located for each Michigan Works! Agency.

Michigan Works Kent and Allegan (Kent, Barry, & Allegan Counties)

Area Community Services Employment and Training (ACSET) Council
1550 Leonard NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505
Telephone (616) 336-4100
Executive Director: Jacob Maas

Central Area Michigan Works! Consortium (Ionia & Montcalm Counties)

Central Area Michigan Works! Consortium
904 Oak Drive – Turk Lake
Greenville, Michigan 48838
Telephone (616) 754-9315
Executive Director: Daniel Petersen

Ottawa County Michigan Works! (Ottawa County)

Ottawa County Michigan Works!
115 Clover St., Suite 200
Holland, Michigan 49423
Telephone (616) 494-3400
Executive Director: William Raymond

Michigan Works! Muskegon-Oceana (Muskegon & Oceana Counties)

Muskegon/Oceana Consortium
316 Morris Avenue, Suite 300
Muskegon, Michigan 49440
Telephone (231) 724-6450
Executive Director: Deborah Groenveld

Michigan Works! West Central (Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Newaygo, & Osceola Counties)

Michigan Works! West Central
14330 Northland Drive
Big Rapids, Michigan 49307
Telephone (231) 796-4891
Executive Director: Paul Griffith

Talent 2025

TALENT 2025's vision is for West Michigan to be globally recognized as a top 20 region in the U.S. where entrepreneurship thrives, and employers want to be, because diverse talent wants to work, learn, and live here. TALENT 2025 is a catalyst to create a truly integrated talent development system designed to make West Michigan a magnet for both talent and jobs.

The goal of this CEO-led effort is to dramatically improve the quality and quantity of the region's talent to meet increasingly more complex and diverse workforce needs. Regional collaboration among all stakeholders in the talent system will ensure that our region is globally competitive with a greater quality of life for all.

Talent 2025
48 Logan St. SW, Suite 124
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
Telephone: (616)871-2450
President : Kevin Stotts

West Michigan Chamber Coalition

The spirit of collaboration is evident among the chambers that formed the West Michigan Chamber Coalition in the late 1990's to promote regionalism, cooperation and a desire to improve the area's business climate in this global economy. The West Michigan Chamber Coalition consists of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce, Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and The Chamber - Grand Haven, Spring Lake, Ferrysburg. The four Chambers of Commerce represent a cross section of businesses with over 6,000 business members with over 265,000 employees. The western boundary is over 50 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline with a large urban center to the east.

The Coalition's mission is to promote the economic vitality of West Michigan through pursuing action and advocacy issues that affects the business community at the local, state and national levels and inform our members on governmental activities, legislation and regulation affecting the entire region. The Coalition conducts joint research and/or problem solving in respect to issues of regional significance.

West Michigan Chamber Coalition
PO Box 6963
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516
Telephone: (616)771-0335
Vice President of Government & Corporate Affairs: Andy Johnston

Other Partners

Michigan Department of Transportation – The Michigan Department of Transportation is a statewide department with regional and local offices across the 13 county region. MDOT works closely with county road commissions, local units of government, regional planning agencies, metropolitan planning organizations, and many others to provide a complete transportation system that serves business and commerce, residents, and visitors to Michigan.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation – The Michigan Economic Development Corporation strives to help existing businesses thrive and to attract new businesses to Michigan. MEDC works closely with communities to insure they are attractive to businesses, residents, and visitors.

Other Michigan Departments – Michigan’s many other departments and agencies’ involvement in the Regional Prosperity Initiative will depend on the recommended projects. During 2014 Michigan began realigning its Departments to align with the Regional Prosperity Initiative boundaries and began assigning people to serve as contacts for each of the Prosperity Regions. Federal agencies may also be called upon to assist in implementation of recommendations.

REGIONAL PROFILE

Service Area

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) boundaries were established by the State of Michigan to align with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) boundaries (Region 4). Additionally, the State of Michigan divided the WMPA into the West Central Prosperity Region and the West Michigan Prosperity Region – but the WMPA decided that these divisions did not add any value to the Regional Prosperity Initiative. The WMPA boundaries include the counties of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa (see Map 1).

Physical Features

The 13 counties within the boundaries of the WMPA cover a total of 8,163 square miles, or about 14.4 percent of Michigan’s land area. One of the most prominent physical features is that the Region lies on Lake Michigan and has 130 miles of coastline. Lake Michigan covers 22,394 square miles and provides drinking water for much of the Region, provides a moderating influence on our weather, provides the shipping opportunities, and is a major recreational resource.

The Region has rolling topography with elevations ranging from 577 feet above mean sea level at Lake Michigan, to 1,720 feet above mean sea level at Grove Hill, in northern Osceola County (the highest point in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula).

In addition to Lake Michigan, there are countless water features in the 13 counties. Major Rivers include the Grand River, which empties into Lake Michigan in Grand Haven; the Muskegon River, which empties into Lake Michigan in Muskegon; the Kalamazoo River, which empties into Lake Michigan in Saugatuck; and the Macatawa River, which empties into Lake Michigan in Holland. Inland lakes of all sizes are located throughout the Region, along with countless tributaries and streams.

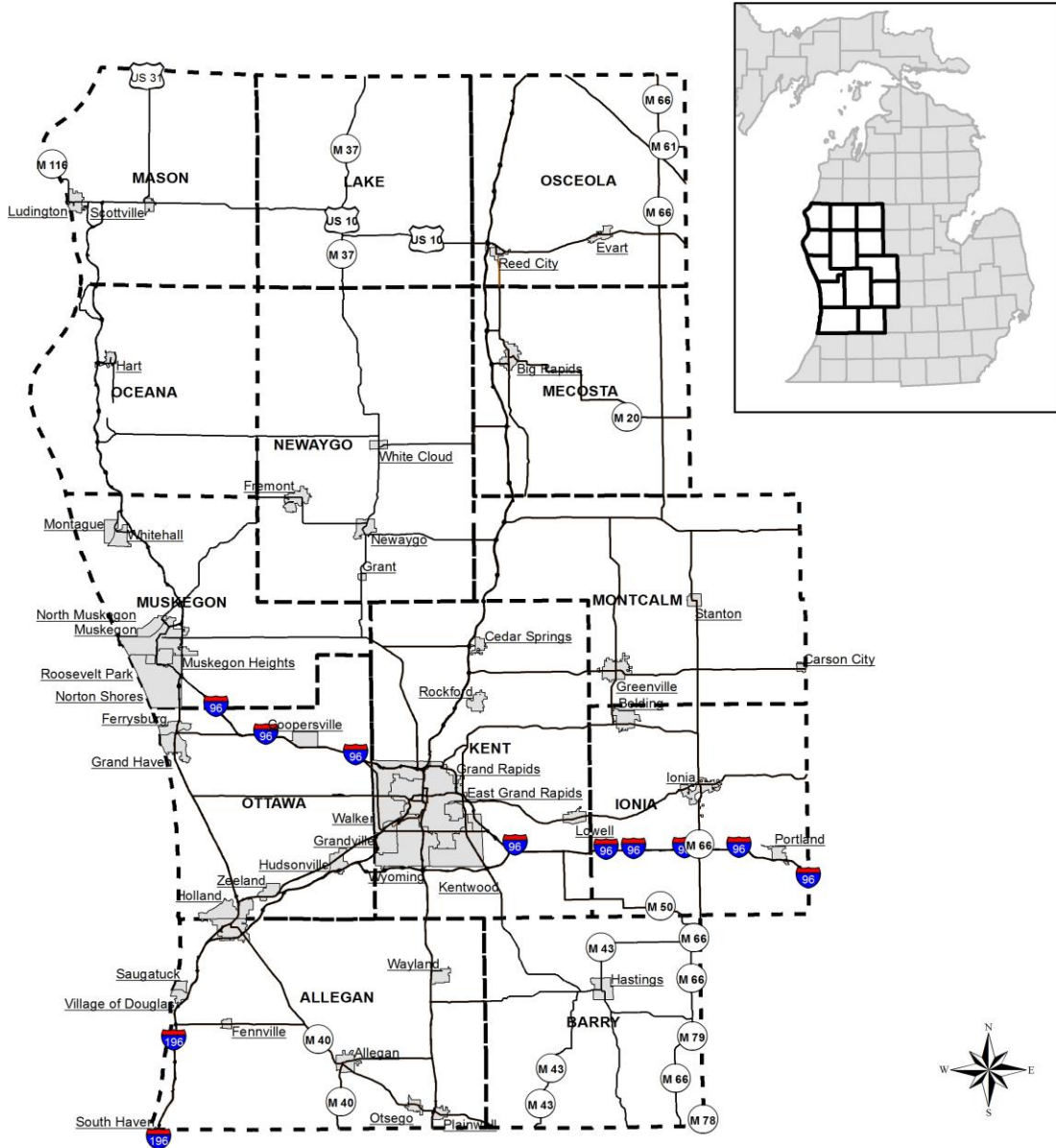
Built Environment

Development in the Region varies from large urbanized areas, to smaller cities and villages, to rural agriculture and forested areas. The southern half of the Region is much more developed than the northern half, with the dividing line roughly between M-57 and M-46. Land uses cover the complete range of uses from industry to open space. One of the unique features about West Michigan relates to the fact that even in the most urbanized areas it is a short trip to rural areas including state and federal forests and game areas.

The Region is well-served by a complete network of interstate highways. I-96 links Muskegon along the shores of Lake Michigan to Detroit in Southeast Michigan. US-131 runs from the Indiana border

MAP 1

Region 4 Service Area
West Michigan Prosperity Alliance



all the way north to Petoskey – although it is two lanes north of Cadillac and south of Kalamazoo. US-31 runs parallel to Lake Michigan from the Indiana border north to Ludington. US-10 runs from Ludington all the way east to Bay City (but is two lanes through the Region). In addition to the Interstate System, there are many state routes, county roads, local roads, and streets that connect West Michigan’s communities to each other and to the rest of Michigan.

Other forms of travel include rail, however, hundreds of miles of rail have been converted to recreational trails over the past 30 years. Passenger service is available between Grand Rapids and Chicago, with a stop in Holland. Intercity bus service is available throughout the Region and transit in one form or another exists in each of the 13 counties. Air service includes several major airports, including the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Kent County, the Muskegon County Airport, the West Michigan Regional Airport in Allegan County south of Holland, and many local airports that serve the aviation needs of West Michigan. Ferry service is a unique feature of West Michigan, with service to Wisconsin from either Muskegon or Ludington.

In addition to roads, communities continuously invest in infrastructure that serves their residents and businesses. Ample drinking water and wastewater systems are in-place in all of the cities, most of the villages, and many townships. These improvements allow for the continued growth in population and allow businesses that rely on water and wastewater treatment to thrive. State parks, county parks, and community parks serve the entire Region. Local schools, colleges, universities, and other public (and private) institutions make up an important part of the built environment maintained to enhance people’s lives.

Population Trends

Table 1 shows that between 2000 and 2010 the population of the 13-County Region served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance increased by 5.5 percent to reach a total of 1,526,202. During the same period, Michigan’s population decreased by 0.6 percent. Overall, the Region grew at a healthy rate, with growth in the decade as high as 10.6 percent in Ottawa County. In 2010 the median age of the Region was 36.3 years, which is younger than Michigan’s median age of 38.9.

Table 1: Population Trends & Median Age

Area	2000 Population	2010 Population	% Change	2010 Median Age
Allegan County	105,665	111,408	5.5	39.2
Barry County	56,755	59,173	4.2	41.2
Ionia County	61,518	63,905	3.8	37.0
Kent County	574,355	602,622	4.9	34.4
Lake County	11,333	11,539	2.4	50.1
Mason County	28,274	28,705	1.5	45.1
Mecosta County	40,553	42,798	5.6	34.0
Montcalm County	61,266	63,342	3.4	39.3
Muskegon County	170,200	172,188	1.2	38.2
Newaygo County	47,874	48,460	1.3	40.9
Oceana County	26,873	26,570	-1.1	41.8
Osceola County	23,197	23,528	1.4	41.8
Ottawa County	238,314	263,801	10.6	34.5
WMPA Region	1,446,177	1,526,202	5.5	36.3
Michigan	9,938,444	9,883,640	-0.6	38.9

Source: U.S. Census of Population and American Community Survey

Education

Table 2 shows that the Region has a lower educational attainment level than the State of Michigan as-a-whole. While information for this study is typically looked at “region-wide” this information is so varied between counties that it may serve the planning process to focus on the differences between the counties. Kent County and Ottawa County are the only counties in the 13 county study area that have a higher percentage of the population 25 and over with at least an Associate’s than Michigan’s figure.

Table 2: Educational Attainment in 2010

Area	Population 25 and Over	Population with an Associate's Degree	Population with a Bachelor's Degree	Population with a Graduate or Professional Degree	% with an Associate's Degree or Higher
Allegan County	73,931	6,062	9,903	4,834	28.1%
Barry County	40,367	3,916	4,429	2,572	27.0%
Ionia County	42,364	3,643	4,268	1,561	22.4%
Kent County	383,460	32,211	79,563	38,872	39.3%
Lake County	8,779	597	471	251	15.0%
Mason County	20,384	1,794	2,455	1,490	28.2%
Mecosta County	25,435	1,958	3,377	2,086	29.2%
Montcalm County	42,482	3,611	3,317	2,137	21.3%
Muskegon County	113,430	11,683	12,818	6,239	27.1%
Newaygo County	32,541	2,603	2,738	1,570	21.2%
Oceana County	18,053	1,715	1,654	1,007	24.2%
Osceola County	15,917	1,337	1,420	662	21.5%
Ottawa County	162,341	13,637	31,638	15,965	37.7%
WMPA Region	979,484	84,767	158,051	79,246	32.9%
Michigan	6,578,519	551,652	1,033,830	645,350	33.9%

Source: American Community Survey

Employment

In 2013, the 13 County Region served by the WMPA had a workforce of 756,465 of which 700,096 were employed. This left 56,396 unemployed and left the area with an unemployment rate of 7.5 percent, which was lower than Michigan's unemployment rate of 8.8 percent. The unemployment rates varied by county from a low of 6.5 percent to a high of 13.1 percent. It is interesting to note that the number of unemployed in the two counties with the lowest unemployment rates (Kent and Ottawa) exceeds the number of unemployed in the remaining 11 counties. This is important when considering "region-wide" approaches to addressing unemployment.

2013 Employment

Area	Work Force	Employed	Unemployed	UE Rate (%)
Allegan County	54,384	50,452	3,932	7.2
Barry County	29,792	27,731	2,061	6.9
Ionia County	29,566	27,255	2,311	7.8
Kent County	320,406	299,728	20,678	6.5
Lake County	3,815	3,314	501	13.1
Mason County	14,605	13,260	1,345	9.2
Mecosta County	19,455	17,580	1,875	9.6
Montcalm County	24,978	22,220	2,758	11.0
Muskegon County	83,178	75,654	7,524	9.0
Newaygo County	21,879	19,964	1,915	8.8
Oceana County	13,474	11,930	1,544	11.5
Osceola County	9,085	8,051	1,034	11.4
Ottawa County	131,848	122,957	8,891	6.7
WMPA Region	756,465	700,096	56,369	7.5
Michigan	4,707,000	4,294,000	413,000	8.8

Source: Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget

Additional information related to the Region is contained in Appendix A of this document.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Relying on the experience of people familiar with the 13-county region is an excellent way to obtain up-to-date information as well as the perceptions related to the Region. Key person interviews were conducted in April and May of 2014 where people were asked their opinions of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Each of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance Steering Committee members was interviewed by Erin Kuhn and Dave Bee (also members of the Steering Committee). Additional key people, identified by the Steering Committee members, were e-mailed surveys to complete.

Strengths

The following areas summarize the strengths identified by the participants:

- **Economy** – Participants identified the economy as a key strength of the Region. West Michigan’s economy tends to recover quicker than the rest of Michigan and the challenges are never as great as in other parts of Michigan. The stability of the companies, as well as the diversity of companies is part of the formula that works for West Michigan. Entrepreneurship is strong in West Michigan and also a key reason the economy thrives.
- **Collaboration** – West Michigan is a place where collaboration is the accepted way of moving forward. Collaboration between the public and private sector, innovative approaches to solving issues, regionalism, and cooperation between organizations all support the forward momentum of West Michigan.
- **Natural Resources** – West Michigan’s natural resources are seen as a major strength. Lake Michigan, the hundreds of inland lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater, forested areas, the variety and quality of agriculture, recreational opportunities, and natural resource-based tourism are all part of what makes West Michigan’s natural resources such a strength.
- **Workforce** – This category is really just another name for the Region’s people. West Michigan is known for its honest and hardworking workforce.
- **Leadership and Organizations** – West Michigan is home to many well run and respected public (including communities of all sizes), non-profit, and private organizations. Leadership of these organizations has a strong voice in West Michigan and ensures collaboration and long-range thinking.
- **Philanthropy** – West Michigan is known for its giving spirit, both large gifts and small. A lot of West Michigan’s success is tied to the commitment of several businesses and families that choose West Michigan as a place to live and to locate their businesses. Philanthropy supports arts and culture, education, healthcare, recreation, the environment, and many other features that make West Michigan special.

- Location – The location and development patterns of West Michigan were mentioned as strengths by participants. The urban-rural mix, short commuting patterns, compact development, and proximity to Chicago and Detroit were all mentioned by participants as strengths. A subcategory of this strength is the transportation network which allows for ease of accessing any part of West Michigan quickly and efficiently.
- Education – While all forms of education were mentioned, the majority of comments related to the Region’s network of colleges and universities. K-12, adult education, and workforce development were also mentioned as part of the overall system in-place to provide lifelong learning experiences.
- Quality of Life – While all of the other strengths contribute to “quality of life” this category includes other strengths not mentioned elsewhere such as affordable cost-of-living, cultural and recreational amenities, healthcare, shopping and services, and other strengths.

Weaknesses

The following areas summarize the weaknesses identified by the participants:

- Lack of Coordination – Participants listed overlapping goals, lack of coordination between organizations, lack of uniform service delivery, and the compartmentalization of services (silos) as weaknesses. Competition between various parts of the 13 County Region adds to the challenges as well as the contrast between urban and rural areas and the number of governmental units in West Michigan.
- Poverty – While overall West Michigan’s residents enjoy a healthy economy there are geographic and social pockets of poverty that exist even in the best of economic times. Several rural counties and many urban areas have higher unemployment and poverty rates than the Region as-a-whole. Additionally, many demographic groups face economic hardships.
- Lack of Higher Education Attainment and Job Skills – Participants described the lack of attainment of college degrees as a major weakness. Reasoning behind these challenges includes cost of tuition and successful graduates leaving Michigan. Stagnate K-12 systems and urban school districts were also mentioned as weaknesses that lead to poor job skills.
- Lack of Diversity – The lack of diversity, the lack of acceptance of diversity, a conservative and closed population, and a small portion of the population as decision-makers were all listed as weaknesses.
- Lack of Funding – The lack of funding relates to many weaknesses in West Michigan (and everywhere else in Michigan). Smaller staffs, age and condition of public infrastructure, the condition of roads, and funding for public schools all fall into this category. Using/pursuing

grants to fund operations or improvements is part of this weakness since grants come and go and take a lot of administrative effort to coordinate.

- People – While people are seen as a strength there are a few things about West Michigan’s residents that can be seen as weaknesses. The idea of being “too nice” surfaced as a weakness and that people will often agree to something at a meeting rather than identify its weaknesses. West Michigan Residents are also seen as too humble and lack the desire/capacity to “toot their own horns.” An aging population and lack of young people (especially in rural areas) was also listed as a weakness.
- Government – While not identified as a major weakness, government did receive some comments by participants. Too many levels of government, too many government units, the time it often takes government to react to requests or issues, barriers and bureaucracy in state government, and lack of public leadership were all cited.
- Location – This category was also not a major issue, but the perception of Detroit as the only part of Michigan was discussed by several people. Also, air quality in West Michigan was listed, and this is primarily a transfer issue from areas west of the Region. Winter and Michigan’s climate are also related to location.

Opportunities

The difference between strengths and opportunities is small and there seems to be a wider range of opportunities. The following areas identify the key opportunities discussed by participants:

- Regional Approach – While also seen as a strength, there is room for greater regional collaboration and coordination of services. Specifics such as creating a regional recreation authority, encouraging local foods, defining prosperity, and using data to identify regional opportunities were mentioned by interview participants.
- Education – Education was mentioned by many participants as an opportunity. Increasing educational attainment, enhancing lifelong training and workforce development, and increasing funding for education are all opportunities. Additionally, the Region’s colleges and universities are a key opportunity, especially in a variety of fields such as healthcare and engineering. Education related to entrepreneurship is an opportunity.
- Economic Growth – This is a key opportunity that depends on many pieces. International companies locating in West Michigan, the growth of existing businesses, the agriculture/valued added industry, manufacturing, Grand Rapids as the center of the Region, and providing jobs for a diverse workforce were all discussed as opportunities.
- Relationships – Improving and expanding relationships with other regions, Chicago, Latin America, public and private leadership, and others were mentioned as opportunities, as well as developing a more global perspective.

- Natural Resources – West Michigan’s natural resources are essential to the future. Water will play an important role in everything from agriculture and manufacturing to tourism and transportation (Lake Michigan and its ports).
- Leadership – Leadership will be required to continue to move forward. Public and private leadership as well as local and state leadership were mentioned.
- Infrastructure – Improving the Region’s infrastructure is an essential opportunity. Planning and promoting “place” is related and leads to other opportunities such as improved transportation and transit, improved methods of funding for necessary improvements (limiting politics), and other infrastructure improvements necessary for prosperity.
- People – All of the opportunities depend on people. A diverse and educated population is necessary to identify and seize opportunities.

Threats

Like opportunities, the difference between weaknesses and threats is small. The following areas identify the key threats discussed by participants:

- Many participants feel that the economy is a large threat, which could influence the continued growth and success of West Michigan. Over reliance on the automobile industry and furniture manufacturing was mentioned as well. Related to the growth of the economy is the growth of the population, which relies on a healthy economy to grow. Loss of young people in rural areas is also part of this threat.
- The improper use of West Michigan’s natural resources was discussed by many participants. This includes the loss of agricultural areas to development, the loss of control over water of all types, the health of the environment, and other concerns related to West Michigan’s natural resources.
- Lack of adequate funding for public infrastructure and decreases in government services were discussed as threats by many participants. Leadership’s willingness to make long-term investments the condition of urban schools, and the lack of focus related to funding improvements were all part of discussions.
- Education was a broad threat that included many smaller threats. Funding public schools, the condition of urban schools, not educating enough of our population, the high cost of tuition, student debt, and other threats all contribute to the overall threat.
- Boundaries and government units within the 13 county region were discussed by several participants. Inter-regional competition, isolationism, the large number of governmental

units and agencies, the number of regional organizations, and even the large size of the Region were all mentioned as threats.

- Michigan's issues are seen as a threat to the Region. Detroit's image is how many people see Michigan as-a-whole and participants mentioned this as a threat. Michigan's winters were mentioned frequently, due to the severity of this winter that people will be discussing for years. Other statewide issues include term limits, state leadership, and overregulation.
- Inadequate transportation systems and willingness to invest in transportation is a key threat mentioned during many discussions.

This analysis was used to assist in developing organizational and overall goals for this Regional Prosperity Plan.

ORGANIZATION ISSUES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

This section of the Regional Prosperity Plan identifies issues, goals, and actions specific to the organizational structure of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA). Currently, the WMPA is a loosely organized alliance of organizations that does not have any staff, permanent budget, bylaws, policies, etc. If the WMPA chooses to move forward (past Fiscal Year 2015) it will need to answer several questions identified in the following issues. These issues will be a large part of the WMPA's efforts during the second year of the Regional Prosperity Initiative.

Issue #1 – There are many public, non-profit, and private organizations focusing on community and economic development, education and training, and other related efforts in the Region served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance. The ability for these organizations to collaborate in a meaningful manner is challenging.

Goal #1 – The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance will continue to facilitate the collaboration of community and economic development, education and training, and other related agencies.

Actions

- Seek funding for FY-2015 to continue working with Michigan's Regional Prosperity Initiative.
- Determine if long-term and sustainable funding can be secured to permanently establish the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance.
- Work to formalize the administrative needs of the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (bylaws, policies, etc.)

Issue #2 – There is a lack of adequate resources to meet the wide range needs of the various sectors located within the 13 county region served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance.

Goal #2 – Maintain an up-to-date list of potential projects needed to promote prosperity across West Michigan.

Actions

- Develop and update project criteria to promote the submission of appropriate projects.
- Seek funding to assist in the implementation of projects.
- Prioritize projects to make the best use of limited resources.

Issue #3 – Overlapping goals, lack of coordination between organizations, lack of uniform service delivery, and the compartmentalization of services (silos) limit the capacity of the WMPA to move forward.

Goal #3 – Develop and maintain an up-to-date set of goals that serve the entire Prosperity Region.

Actions

- Use this Regional Prosperity Plan as the basis for these goals (see next section).
- Regularly review and update the goals to continue moving forward.
- Encourage entities to incorporate these goals into their planning initiatives.

Issue #4 – Leadership will be required to continue to move forward. Public and private leadership as well as local and state leadership were mentioned.

Goal #4 – Utilize the WMPA as a tool to grow leadership opportunities and relationships between public and private organizations.

Actions

- Maintain the WMPA Steering Committee
- Continue to involve the larger Alliance to build public and private relationships and leadership opportunities.
- Seek opportunities to expand ways for the larger Alliance to be involved in the Initiative.

Issue #5 – Concern of developing another layer of regional government.

Goal #5 – Build and promote the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance in a manner that encourages collaboration without the need for additional administrative layers or organizations.

Actions

- Work with existing eligible organizations to determine capacity of these organizations to move the WMPA forward.
- Identify potential collaborative projects that the eligible organizations could accomplish to create additional capacity.
- Adopt a sunset clause to allow the Alliance to monitor its progress and long-term usefulness.

REGIONAL ISSUES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

This section of the Regional Prosperity Plan identifies issues, goals, and actions that relate to the communities and organizations within the 13 county region served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA). Since these communities and organizations are independent and not controlled by the WMPA, the goals and actions are more general and serve as recommendations instead of directives. The WMPA will use whatever resources are available in the future to help realize these goals and actions.

Issue #1 – While West Michigan has lower unemployment and poverty levels (when compared to Michigan as-a-whole) there are areas within the Region and segments of the population that do not benefit from these trends.

Goal #1 – The Region will strive to address economic distress for the entire population.

Actions

- Work with each of the 13 counties to ensure that an adequate level of economic and community development are in-place to promote the economy.
- Identify a minimum level of service that each county should provide, and identify potential sources of funding for maintaining these services.
- Identify existing gaps in economic and community development services.

Issue #2 – Higher education and job skills are lower in West Michigan than needed for the Region to achieve success.

Goal #2 – Promote lifelong learning in West Michigan using the public and private K-12 systems, Intermediate School Districts, colleges and universities, workforce development agencies, and private businesses.

Actions

- Public and private K-12 institutions, as well as Intermediate School Districts, will strive to provide the base for a solid lifelong learning experience chosen by each individual to match their strengths and desires.
- Colleges and Universities will strive to provide affordable educational opportunities needed by West Michigan's population and businesses.
- West Michigan will strive to provide the jobs and the community infrastructure necessary to keep people in the Region.

Issue #3 – Threats to West Michigan's natural resources (water, air, forests, agriculture, etc.) are seen as an issue that can impact our prosperity for generations.

Goal #3 – The Region will preserve and enhance its natural resources.

Actions

- West Michigan will protect its water and other natural resources by supporting existing organizations and identifying any gaps that exist related to enhancement of the Region’s natural features.
- Seek to protect farmland by helping farmers thrive in West Michigan by expanding value-added agricultural opportunities.
- West Michigan will work with the State of Michigan and the Federal Government to ensure every opportunity is seized to preserve the Great Lakes.

Issue #4 – Maintaining public infrastructure and services is difficult as costs rise and revenues to state and local units of government decline.

Goal #4 – Promote the efficient maintenance and improvements of West Michigan’s public assets.

Actions

- Work with leadership and the public to ensure that our public infrastructure is treated as an ongoing investment.
- Utilized every available resource to promote improving public infrastructure.
- Work with the private sector to promote the relationship of thriving communities and thriving businesses.

Issue #5 – Collaboration cannot be a one-time initiative that changes with administrations.

Goal #5 – West Michigan will strive to create a sustainable approach to collaboration.

Actions

- West Michigan will support collaboration with, or without, the involvement of the State of Michigan or the Federal Government by seeking a low-cost and sustainable approach to collaboration.
- West Michigan will continue to seek ways to efficiently promote prosperity for the entire population.
- West Michigan will continue to maintain a list of projects of regional significance.

WEST MICHIGAN PROSPERITY ALLIANCE PROJECTS

Overview

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) decided that the focus of the effort during the first year would be to identify projects of regional significance. This approach is similar to other existing programs such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) or any of the Michigan Department of Transportation's planning efforts to solicit and rank transportation projects. The key difference between other programs is that they are tied to funding programs, and therefore have detailed criteria to follow that limit the types of potential projects. The WMPA approach solicits ideas based on very broad criteria – making it easier to submit a project. While this approach may seem purposeless if there is no funding source to carry out the project, it is really how all planning should be performed. Planning based on available funding is very limiting. Planning, based on needs and related goals, is the best way to develop an appropriate vision.

The WMPA went through many steps to arrive at the final method for gathering and evaluating projects. Initially, a much more detailed project submission sheet was developed and more specific criteria for evaluating projects were developed. After much discussion and several meetings, a very basic project submission form was developed and five broad criteria were agreed upon by the Steering Committee.

Projects were solicited by the Steering Committee. The solicitation forms were distributed to communities, organizations, and individuals. The WMPA requested that projects be submitted by May 31, 2014. Projects were e-mailed to the Prosperity Plan Committee, which took all of the information and developed summaries of each of the projects that identified the name of the project, who was submitting the project, contact information, and a 200 word summary of each project. A total of 31 projects were submitted.

During the week of June 23, 2014 the Prosperity Plan Committee and the three officers of the Steering Committee met to evaluate the projects and to select the top projects to submit to the Steering Committee for approval. The group decided to establish three tiers of projects based on the established criteria.

The first tier of projects consists of six projects that will be the focus of the Regional Prosperity Plan. The Prosperity Plan Committee will gather additional information for each of the projects and work to expand collaboration in order to move the projects forward.

The second and third tier list of projects will also be included in the Prosperity Plan and will receive recommendations for how to move forward and how to strengthen the projects to meet the needs of the 13-county region.

Evaluation Criteria

The WMPA solicited projects from across the region and from across interests. The WMPA evaluated each project based on the following criteria adopted by the WMPA on April 30, 2014. The WMPA will identify and expand on the top projects identified through this process in the Regional Prosperity Plan, but all projects are listed to allow for potential implementation in the future or through other processes. A project may be a built project, a program that promotes prosperity, or a hybrid.

1. Long-term impact & sustainability of project
2. Regional Impact – proportion of the Region potentially impacted by the project
3. Provide employment opportunities to people with a variety of skill levels in a variety of employment sectors
4. Recognizes Region’s strengths and challenges
5. Project promotes and supports public and private partnerships

Tier One Alliance Projects

The following seven projects are listed in no particular order. Two of the projects (1.2.A and 1.2.B) were submitted by separate organizations, but will be combined.

1.1.	Project Title:	Connected Community Engagement Program, Technology Action Planning
	Project Contact:	Connect Michigan, Eric Frederick, 517-994-8024, efrederick@connectmi.org
	Project Location:	Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Montcalm Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, and Ottawa counties (other counties have plans in-place)
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: Connect Michigan is helping communities identify their technology needs and opportunities. Through this program, communities work to expand the availability, adoption, and use of technology toward creating a more productive and technology-savvy population, a better business environment, more effective community and economic development, improved healthcare, enhanced education, and more efficient government. The Connected program is comprised of four primary steps; 1) Identify community champions and gather local stakeholders, 2) Assess the local broadband/technology landscape, 3) Identify gaps and develop a technology action plan, and 4) Implement projects to increase access, adoption, and use of broadband and technology and achieve Connected Certification. Connect Michigan Community Technology Advisors typically meet with each community/county once per month for eight to fourteen months, depending on the time required to complete the assessment and planning process. While this grassroots-style of engagement is more resource intensive, it is showing results and provides the best environment for collaboration, accountability, and implementation. <u>Our proposal for the Region 4 Prosperity Initiative is to implement the Connected Community Engagement program in the ten remaining counties in the region to address local broadband and technology issues, help accelerate broadband expansion, and establish a broadband planning process throughout the region.</u></p>		

1.2.A	Project Title:	Emerge Regional Website Portal
	Project Contact:	Emerge, Laurie Supinski, 231-250-2845, laurie@emergewm.com
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: Emerge is a group of public and private organizations, working to provide services to entrepreneurs. The name Emerge originated when a group of lakeshore Entrepreneurial Support Organizations (ESOs) formed a collaborative alliance. Within a similar timeframe a growing ESO group in Grand Rapids developed a web portal to serve as a one stop shop for entrepreneurs. Recognizing the similar missions, the groups established a West Michigan Regional effort with over 40 regional partners across seven counties. <u>Keeping the Emerge name, the group researched a number of best practices and expanded the primary goal of a web portal to aggregate resources, identify responsibilities, and ensure access to resources.</u></p> <p>The Emerge portal allows entrepreneurs to identify partner organizations that provide the assistance they need. Once they've engaged with a partner for help, the Emerge portal will track their progression to ensure they receive the necessary support for their start-up activity. The portal will evolve to track the progress of the entrepreneurs and will serve as a tool to identify the strengths of the services provided by the region as well as any gaps. The initiative's strategy highlights West Michigan's organized approach to economic growth.</p>		

1.2.B	Project Title:	E-Merge West Michigan
	Project Contact:	Talent 2025, Kevin Stotts, 616-871-2425, kstotts@TALENT2025.org
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: <u>Talent 2025 is leading the development of a business plan to create a regional framework to foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem within Region 4.</u> The key partners in this process will include Talent 2025 companies, the interim E-Merge West Michigan Executive Committee, Region 4 business incubators, economic development organizations, local units of government, entrepreneurial services organizations, institutions and entrepreneurial service providers currently supporting entrepreneurship and innovation within the region. The plan will provide an implementation plan for developing a regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. The plan will build upon the existing organizations supporting and delivering outcomes, identify gaps, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the ecosystem to ensure investment and job creation is above and beyond what is currently being delivered and in more business sectors and skill levels.</p> <p>The challenges the region faces as it relates to talent retention, attraction, and retraining will be addressed through this plan. Having an entrepreneurial ecosystem will help us retain the talented workforce that is trained in our educational institutions, attract the talent needed to serve the region, and allow for the existing workforce to engage in entrepreneurship in ways they not have before. The organization will build upon the strengths of the region.</p>		

1.3.	Project Title:	Protecting Lake Michigan Water Quality through Establishment of a Dedicated Revenue Stream for Watershed Management
	Project Contact:	Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, Steve Bulthuis, 616-395-2688, sbulthuis@the-macc.org
	Project Location:	Entire West Michigan Prosperity Region
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: <u>This proposal develops a program that would generate sustainable financial resources to protect the water quality of Lake Michigan.</u> Funding would be distributed to local watershed organizations working under federally approved watershed management plans. All thirteen counties Region 4 contain watersheds that drain into Lake Michigan and most have watershed management plans. The Governor has emphasized the importance of water as a competitive advantage for the state and important to economic development. Depending on the type of project being undertaken by a particular organization, employment opportunities are numerous. Water resources are a strategic advantage for the state and are likely to become more so in the future. Impact could be furthered by collaborating with other RPI regions. Watershed management plans must include a strategy for sustaining the watershed. This project would have long-term impacts. Many watershed-based organizations already have public-private partnerships. The Office of Great Lakes is poised to release Michigan’s Water Strategy that will address such topics as: invasive species, water withdrawal, water use and conflict, water quality and infrastructure, legacy pollution and restoration, algal blooms and muck, and coastal resilience. This proposal would strengthen watershed-based organizations that have control over water quality improvements for their particular situation.</p>		

1.4.	Project Title:	Michigan Works Strategic Redesign
	Project Contact:	Muskegon Michigan Works, Deborah Groeneveld, 231-724-6450, groeneveldde@miworksmo.org
	Project Location:	West Michigan
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: West Michigan has a history of entrepreneurship and innovation, and its job creators have led the charge out of the Great Recession. However, we are approaching a talent crisis, which will halt the progress we have made if we do not find a solution quickly. The disconnect is that people looking for work do not have the skills to fill employers’ needs. Employers are critical of the community’s ability to produce employees with the necessary skills so that they can remain globally competitive. <u>Michigan Works! Region 4 desires to provide local employers with more work/skill ready employees.</u> With the engagement of a design thinking firm, that focuses on Human Centered Design, as a partner with Michigan Works! Region 4 it will help us understand the talent needs and why many job seekers fall short of employer expectations. This project will give Michigan Works! Region 4 the advantage of closing the skills gap between employers and job seekers. This solution may also become a best practice for the State of Michigan and possibly the entire Country.</p>		

1.5.	Project Title:	Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub
	Project Contact:	West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission, Erin Kuhn, 231-722-7878, ekuhn@wmsrdc.org
	Project Location:	Muskegon County, Michigan
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission in Partnership with Muskegon County, the City of Muskegon, Muskegon Area First, and Grand Valley State University Michigan Alternative & Renewable Energy Center is submitting the Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub project. <u>A group of regional public and private community leaders are working together to further the development of the Muskegon Port as a regional logistic hub and an economic asset to the region.</u> The Muskegon Port is serviced by a variety of multi-model assets including truck routes, rail access points, and airports. The Port of Muskegon is utilized for both recreational and commercial uses. Leaders in Muskegon County are looking at the feasibility of establishing a local food hub and the U.S. Coast Guard has been petitioned to allow river barges with a conditional exemption from load line requirements onto the Calumet, IL-Muskegon route along Lake Michigan, which will significantly increase the use of the port as a regional logistic hub. The Alternative Energy sector is interested in partnering in the development of the port. The successful development of a regional logistic hub will require collaboration amongst several regional partnerships some of which have already been established through various groups.</p>		

1.6.	Project Title:	Michigan Work Ready Communities
	Project Contact:	Talent 2025, Kevin Stotts, 616-871-2425, kstotts@TALENT2025.org
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: <u>The Michigan Work Ready Communities (MiWRC) initiative will assist employers to find work-ready individuals.</u> Employers are struggling to find individuals whose training, skills, and experience match specific job requirements. Many job candidates are also unable to demonstrate a match between their skills and experience for jobs to which they apply. By being able to quantify and report the employability skill sets of the West Michigan workforce, employers outside the region will be more likely to relocate to West Michigan.</p> <p>MiWRC focuses on enhancing fundamental credentials of young people who are ready to enter the workforce, as well as adults who have two years or less in a post-secondary education. This initiative will match the needs of employers in industry sectors, represented in the region, to the skills and expertise of potential employees. By having a standardized certification requirement for the region, employers will have tools to better ensure suitability and retention of talent.</p> <p>This initiative brings together workforce and economic development and links K-12 and higher education to employers. This initiative will help identify skill gaps and as a result, help to plan for training and develop actions that are necessary in the region.</p>		

Tier Two Alliance Projects, Strategies, and Funding Options

2.1.	Project Title:	Agri-Food Technology Academy
	Project Contact:	Starting Block Inc., Ron Steiner, 231-873-1432, tsbi1@frontier.com
	Project Location:	Starting Block Inc., Oceana County
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: The Starting Block Inc. (SBI), a kitchen incubator located in Oceana County, is developing an Agri-Food Technology Academy. Opening in 2006, SBI provides entrepreneurial education through area resources and local partnerships with educational institutions, workforce developers, economic development professionals, business and manufacturing leaders, and local governments. We are expanding into the Agri-Food Processing Sector to focus on the "Skills-Gap" of our food processing cluster. Other counties in the region have incubator projects either established or being planned. SBI wants to expand its entrepreneurial training program to include Food Processing/Manufacturing Technologies. This Initiative would reach all 13 counties in Region 4. Pieces of this "Skills-Gap" initiative exist, in the region, but they are operating or being planned independently, and are not consistently sharing best practices, referring clients to each other's specialty, or coordinating training efforts. <u>This proposed project is to form a regional coordinated effort, governed by a council or board made up of representatives from all 13 counties.</u> This project will apply economic/industrial "clustering" concepts to the Agri-Food Processing sector. The Academy will offer coordinated entrepreneurial training throughout the region. Establishing a regional entrepreneurial program to serve the Region, will meet the mission of SBI and many of its partners.</p>		

2.2.	Project Title:	FoodWorks for the West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance
	Project Contact:	Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Crystal LeCoy, 616-805-5308, crystal@downtownmarketgr.com
	Project Location:	Grand Rapids City Market
	Criteria Addressed:	1,3,4,5
<p>Project Summary: The Grand Rapids Downtown Market works as a catalyst for both cooperative education and small business development, allowing entrepreneurs to reinvent the local food economy. The Market is for food start-ups and entrepreneurs seeking support. To support this program, it is essential to create a community of food entrepreneurs. <u>The Grand Rapids Downtown Market Incubator Kitchen is working to collaborate with regional organizations and incubator kitchens to develop FoodWorks.</u> Participants share information, resources, and support. <i>FoodWorks</i> is designed to support entrepreneurs through education, networking opportunities, collaborative development, and ancillary resources. This program builds upon our region’s agricultural heritage and diversity as well as an abundance of fresh water – key for agriculture and food processing. <i>FoodWorks</i> began in January 2014 and currently operates through a listserv and weekly office hours and is comprised of more than 200 entrepreneurs and business owners in the West Michigan area. We would like to partner with the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance to secure presenters and mentors for the <i>Make Food Work</i> program. In summary, it is <i>FoodWorks</i> objective to enhance and grow West Michigan’s network of food entrepreneurs, to increase education and application of sustainable, viable food businesses within West Michigan.</p>		

2.3.	Project Title:	Allegan County College Access Network and Specialty School Network Concept
	Project Contact:	City of Allegan, Robert Hillard, 269-673-5511, rhillard@cityofallegan.org
	Project Location:	Allegan Area
	Criteria Addressed:	1,3,4,5
<p>Project Summary: The Allegan City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) feels stronger educational awareness is needed to increase job creation and educational attainment. The EDC is involved in the Allegan County College Access Network (ACCAN) and the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN). The goal is that citizens obtain college and/or advanced certification for 60 percent of the adult population. The Allegan Area Education Service Agency (AAESA) supports the effort. We believe a regional focus and aligning efforts would help to reach the goal. We believe with supportive regional leadership, this broad based effort could be developed.</p> <p>To raise educational attainment, a Specialty School Network Concept for neighborhoods and small towns throughout region can be established. <u>The Allegan Area has identified attracting a culinary school to raise the awareness of the “Farm to Table” effort.</u> Allegan has a building that could be developed to host the school, and provide opportunities to attract young adults to the downtown. This partnership will allow Allegan to be a Pilot. Other neighborhoods and small towns can also attract specialty schools to their communities based on their specialized fit. This initiative would increase educational attainment, inspire entrepreneurs to startup businesses, and create stronger community networks throughout the region.</p>		

2.4.	Project Title:	Machining Program Coordination and Alignment
	Project Contact:	Grand Rapids Community College, Fiona Hert, 616-234-3744, fhert@grcc.edu
	Project Location:	Community Colleges
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: A very diverse group of manufacturing companies around West Michigan depend on community colleges to teach machining skills to the adult population. While differences in regional employer needs could impact programming in this area, better alignment of equipment, curriculum, and competencies could benefit employers and the workforce. The four West Michigan community colleges (Grand Rapids Community College, Montcalm Community College, Muskegon Community College, and West Shore Community College) are proposing to engage in a process to inventory current program practices and implement a plan to improve coordination and alignment. The particular outcomes of this plan are not agreed on yet and would be subject to the results of the inventory and employer input. We see this process as a model to scale to other disciplines in the workforce departments of West Michigan’s community colleges. <u>The benefit to West Michigan would be an easier to understand education system for employers and the workforce that would expedite future employee training and employment.</u> It would potentially reduce time to completion and allow for students and employers to access training that was consistent across the region.</p>		

2.5.	Project Title:	Lake Michigan Water Trail - Advancing the Blue Economy through Water Based Recreational Development
	Project Contact:	WMSRDC, Kathy Evans, 231-722-7878, kevans@wmsrdc.org
	Project Location:	West Michigan
	Criteria Addressed:	1,3,4,5
<p>Project Summary: This prosperity project builds upon the work completed for development of the Lake Michigan Water Trail (LMWT). <u>Its goal is to advance water-based recreation as part of Michigan's Water Strategy in order to grow Michigan's Blue Economy.</u> The development of a nationally recognized water trail will build upon the strengths of Michigan's waterways. In order to reach the project goals tasks will be carried out to meet five objectives: 1) There will be greater awareness in local communities of the opportunities for economic benefits. 2) The LMWT Plan recommendations will be incorporated into community recreation plans. 3) Standardized water trail signage will be developed. 4) Enhance the Michigan Great Lakes Water Trails website as a front door to the public for water trail opportunities in Michigan. 5) The Regional Councils will gather and compile the documentation necessary to meet the NPS National Water Trail designation criteria: This will be done in preparation of a NPS application for a Lake Michigan National Water Trail designation in coordination with the MDNR and other regional water trail partners.</p>		

Tier Three Alliance Projects, Strategies, and Funding Options

3.1.	Project Title:	Coast-to-Coast Passenger Rail
	Project Contact:	Cascade Charter Township, Ben Swayze, 616-949-1504, bswayze@cascadetwp.com
	Project Location:	CSX Rail Corridor between Holland and Detroit
	Criteria Addressed:	All
<p>Project Summary: In 2011, the Michigan Department of Transportation published Michigan’s State Rail Plan that recommended a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement and Alternatives Analysis to be completed for passenger rail service in the Detroit/Lansing/Grand Rapids corridor, including exploration of expanded services to Holland. <u>This project proposes re-establishing passenger rail service between Holland and Detroit, via Grand Rapids and Lansing.</u></p> <p>People travel from 10 of the 13 counties within the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance to Grand Rapids to take the current Pere Marquette service between Grand Rapids and Chicago. In 2009, a Grand Valley State University study, found that across Michigan over \$62 million of quantifiable community benefits are attributable to passenger rail access. These community benefits include passenger savings, local Amtrak investments, and local business benefits.</p> <p>Currently, our region’s only passenger surface connection to southeast Michigan and our state capital is by the I-96 highway that runs between Norton Shores and Detroit. We also have existing freight rail access via the CSX tracks between Holland and Detroit. Passenger rail service in this corridor has not been an option since 1971. Re-starting rail access could provide new public-private partnerships to revive the metropolitan regions of West and East Michigan.</p>		
3.2.	Project Title:	Great Lakes Technology Park
	Project Contact:	JMB Associates, LLC, James Bernier, 231-429-2292, jmbassoc@charter.net
	Project Location:	Ludington
	Criteria Addressed:	3
<p>Project Summary: <u>This proposal is a private sector effort to develop the Great Lakes Technology Park, a data center technology complex.</u> The effort was structured around a State of Michigan initiative to seek new IT data center facilities to spur IT spending and create jobs. The project’s lead proponents are Boji Group of Lansing and Consumers Energy. The proposed site is adjacent to the Ludington Pumped Storage Project, south of Ludington. The site is a great fit for a data center’s needs, is ideal for a number of reasons specific to West Michigan, and could provide many benefits to the area such as jobs related to today’s high tech economy and many construction jobs. The team is hoping to see action by Michigan in 2014 or 2015 to seek new data center services. This is an excellent opportunity to boost Michigan’s status in the information technology economy and jump start the development of new business in this growing area of commerce. The GLTP project would benefit at this juncture from the WMPA support in promoting awareness of this project proposal among area businesses that may have a need for data storage services to help secure them as potential clients.</p>		

3.3.	Project Title:	Grand River Waterfront Stadium
	Project Contact:	City of Grand Haven, Pat McGinnis, 616-847-4888
	Project Location:	City of Grand Haven
	Criteria Addressed:	4
<p>Project Summary: The waterfront Stadium in Grand Haven was constructed in the mid 1960’s to complement and extend a community vision that our waterfront should be more than an industrial connection to rail and highway transportation systems in Michigan. Various community groups, public and private, are joining in 2014 to reconstruct this West Michigan attraction to create a more active and accessible waterfront for the public to enjoy.</p> <p>The antiquated steel bleachers are to be demolished and replaced with a more park-like tiered amphitheater, somewhat reminiscent of Meijer Gardens. Preliminary costs estimates of \$4 million include the replacement of the river revetment, construction of a new stadium and complete renovation of the Tri Cities Historical Museum Train Depot Transportation museum.</p> <p><u>This investment will revitalize the riverfront (millions of visitors every year), give patrons another bold entertainment option ON THE WATER and create an evening musical fountain memory that will elevate the Pure Michigan charm of the Grand River and Lake Michigan.</u> When complete, this will be the best sunset on the planet!</p>		

3.4.	Project Title:	Regional Resiliency Planning and Implementation Initiative
	Project Contact:	City of Grand Rapids Office of Energy and Sustainability; Dr. Haris Alibašić, 616-456-3497, halibasic@grcity.us
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	1,4
<p>Project Summary: <u>The Regional Resiliency Planning and Implementation Initiative would identify how communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme events.</u> We would develop a framework which communities could use to prepare for disasters by cultivating a regional understanding of disasters and emergency preparedness. The Office of Energy and Sustainability is working with West Michigan Sustainable Business Form (WMSBF), West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), and West Michigan Community Sustainability Partnership (WMCSP) to define regional resiliency and implement the program. Regional planning as a means of creating resilience is largely nonexistent in many places. This has discouraged the adoption of controls that could prevent loss during future events. Grand Rapids has a unique Sustainability Plan with over 200 economic, environmental, and social targets. The City realizes the need for energy reduction, easy access to public transit infrastructure, local and organic foods, and reduction of waste by the reuse of resources, and has established targets to address those concerns. The City has made many resilience-based improvements and all of these efforts are measured and tracked. The City and WMEAC has developed a Climate Resiliency Report that addresses threats such as heat and precipitation events. A Regional Resiliency Framework would enhance regional resilience.</p>		

3.5.	Project Title:	Grow Microloan Program
	Project Contact:	Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, Bonnie Nawara, 616-458-3404, bnawara@growbusiness.org
	Project Location:	West Michigan Counties of Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa, Kalamazoo, Newaygo, Ionia, Barry, Allegan, and Montcalm.
	Criteria Addressed:	2,3
<p>Project Summary: In 2010 Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW) received a \$50,000 pilot microloan grant. In 2012 the Small Business Administration (SBA) added GROW as an intermediary lender. In all, the program has funded 41 loans totaling \$385,691. Additionally, 46 jobs have been created.</p> <p>The program is directed at businesses that do not have access to traditional financing options. With funds borrowed from the SBA in 2013, GROW is expanding into other markets to deploy loan funds. We are also looking into certifications that will enhance the programs legitimacy and increase access to lending and operational funds. This will contribute to the programs long term sustainability.</p> <p>GROW is building bridges to other organizations through the microloan to mentor applicants that are not at a point where they can apply for a microloan. These other mentors have a greater ability to follow up with the borrowers to help them prepare necessary documents.</p> <p>The SBA awards grants to intermediaries to provide technical assistance to applicants and borrowers. This grant has a matching minimum cash match requirement of 12.5%. Likewise, the SBA mandates each intermediary maintains a 15% reserve fund. <u>Those funds must be raised before additional funds can be drawn from the SBA.</u></p>		

3.6.	Project Title:	Create Base Layers for Region 4
	Project Contact:	Grand Rapids Township, Michael DeVries, 616-361-7391, devriesm@grandrapidstwp.org
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2
<p>Project Summary: <u>In the interest of every participant in the Regions of Prosperity initiative, the creation of a standard Geographic Information System inventory of basic information would be crucial.</u> There are three platforms in use in Region 4 that could be the host to the Regional GIS and a partnership with anyone of those could be possible. The first steps would establish basic layers of aerial photography and property descriptions that over time can be enhanced with census, land use and transportation layers. The project benefits Region 4 and its residents by providing a resource library of resources available to support economic growth.</p>		

3.7.	Project Title:	A Clean Water Program for West Michigan
	Project Contact:	GVSU, John Koches, 616-331-3792, kochesj@gvsu.edu
	Project Location:	Greater West Michigan Region
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2,4
<p>Project Summary: The connection between west Michigan’s economy and high quality water resources is obvious. Given that the connection we have with the waters found throughout our region is undeniable, there is no comprehensive system in place to determine water quality trends and there is no way to communicate whether our water is even “good or bad”.</p> <p><u>The region needs to take responsibility for its own water quality monitoring program.</u> We need to integrate water quality as an element of a more comprehensive sustainability strategy which balances social, economic, and environmental goals. We need a water quality monitoring strategy which not only collects the information, but reports what is learned in a way that allows the formulation of meaningful policy.</p> <p>In 2010 the Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI) developed the report titled, <i>Recommendations for a West Michigan Water Quality Index</i>. This report should be updated, but it can serve as a baseline for further discussions. Currently, the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) is giving this issue considerable attention. Representatives from Grand Rapids, Wyoming, Walker, East Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and others including the MDEQ, are giving serious consideration as to how each might contribute to a larger mission and overall goal.</p>		

3.8.	Project Title:	A Climate Resiliency Strategy for a Prosperous West Michigan
	Project Contact:	GVSU, John Koches, 616-331-3792, kochesj@gvsu.edu
	Project Location:	Greater West Michigan Region
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2,4
<p>Project Summary: It is difficult to predict the extent to which our climate will change. We already see signs of increased flooding, high incidents of drought, and more volatile and often severe weather patterns. For our municipalities this translates into an increase need for stormwater infrastructure, more road repair and maintenance, and concerns by those responsible regarding new disease, energy conservation, emergency preparedness, the protection of sanitary sewers, and the availability of locally grown nutritious food. <u>What is needed is a region wide climate Resiliency Strategy.</u> The development of a West Michigan Resiliency Strategy requires the input from different communities from across the region. Each community should shepherd its own Resiliency Strategy in a coordinated fashion. Factors to consider would include impacts to the economy, social equity, and environmental protection. Key to a successful Resiliency Strategy would be the collection of appropriate data and the development of consistent indicators. The process would begin with the formation of a Steering Committee including representatives from participating communities. It will be the Steering Committee’s responsibility to craft overall goals and develop a work plan. The project team would include those experienced with local government policy development, information and education specialists, and climate science researchers.</p>		

3.9.	Project Title:	Saugatuck-Holland Bus Service
	Project Contact:	Interurban Transit Authority, Douglas Michigan, 269-857-1301, pyff@saugatuckinterurban.org
	Project Location:	Interurban Transit Authority Service area to Max Service area
	Criteria Addressed:	1
<p>Project Summary: <u>This project involves developing a program to provide service between Saugatuck and Holland 3 days per week/ two trips per day.</u> This would allow Saugatuck/Douglas area residents transportation for Medical appointments, job opportunities, and additional shopping or recreational choices. It would also allow Holland area residents transportation to Saugatuck for additional shopping or recreational choices. Currently there is very limited service for transportation between Saugatuck and Holland provided by Allegan County Transportation and Pioneer Resources. This program can benefit both the residents and businesses of our area by providing greater access to necessities to residents that are not provided in Saugatuck and exposing Saugatuck/Douglas area business to potential new customers.</p>		

3.10.	Project Title:	Community Links System
	Project Contact:	Muskegon County Department of Human Services, Jane Johnson, 231-733-3870, johnsonj13@michigan.gov
	Project Location:	Muskegon County
	Criteria Addressed:	2
<p>Project Summary: Transportation is key to economic development. <u>This proposal will link currently funded transportation resources in innovative ways to address transportation gaps.</u> A non-traditional group of leaders will be assembled to review how their transportation resources could build options and links to currently available transportation. Sustainability of developed transportation options is planned through shared resources that require minimal new dollars. This would be accomplished through fully utilizing resources that are currently funded.</p> <p>Employment opportunities would be developed in a number of ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanded employment options: Part-time bus drivers could be provided full-time employment in a cooperative arrangement. 2. Muskegon and West Michigan are a mix of urban/suburban/rural. This mix requires a transportation system with tiers of service and resources that are more diverse and flexible than area with a substantial urban center. 3. Employers who have challenges filling positions, or deal with absenteeism due to transportation barriers, could be served with additional and flexible transportation options that assist their employees. 4. A community with a robust and varied transportation system attracts business and supports community vitality. 5. Public/Private partnership is key to development of a flexible and option rich transportation system and both will benefit from the success of the project. 		

3.11.	Project Title:	Prairie Street Bridge Replacement and Downtown Development
	Project Contact:	Village of Muir, Doug Hyland, 989-855-2094, mrdoug2@frontier.com
	Project Location:	Village of Muir, Ionia County
	Criteria Addressed:	1
<p>Project Summary: Muir’s main street currently includes the post office, an insurance agency, a software developer, a funeral home and the Village offices. Seeds of Muir’s rebirth are evident now as a young man is restoring his storefront with plans to open a small furniture restoration business in it. He also plans to restore the upper floors as apartments. Just as the lumber business and railroad created a sense of place for the original Muir settlement, it is the Village’s hope that the soon-to-be-opened, Clinton Ionia Shiawasee (CIS) regional trail, the Twin Rivers Bridge, and new recreational opportunities will spark its rebirth. The CIS trail (also known as the Maple River Valley Trail) will pass behind the commercial buildings on the north side of Superior Street (downtown), and bring over 100,000 visitors to Muir annually! Construction of the project began in 2013.</p> <p><u>The Twin Rivers Bridge project, located at the southern edge of Muir’s downtown, will complement the CIS trail.</u> The existing bridge will remain in place as a pedestrian bridge, allowing CIS trail users a connection to the Village of Lyons. The economic opportunity facing Muir is an exciting one, and replacing its aging bridge is a key link to its resurgence!</p>		

3.12.	Project Title:	Muskegon Food Hub Feasibility Study
	Project Contact:	Morse Marketing Connections, Marty Gerencer, 231-638-2981, marty@morseconnections.com
	Project Location:	Muskegon County
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2
<p>Project Summary: In 2013, Morse Marketing Connections (MMC), a national leader in the food hub movement that is based in Muskegon, was asked by the Community Foundation for Muskegon County, local government officials, and business leaders to explore the potential for creating one or more food hubs within the West Michigan region. The decommissioning of the Consumers Energy power plant on Muskegon’s deep water port provides a rare opportunity to strengthen the region’s agriculture by transforming this property into a food hub that aggregates, processes, and distributes local foods throughout the Midwest. Other sites in the region will also be explored as potential locations.</p> <p><u>The Community Foundation for Muskegon County, fiduciary for this project, Morse Marketing Connections, LLC, Market Ventures, Inc., and Cherry Capital Foods propose to conduct a feasibility study to guide implementation of a food hub in the thirteen county West Michigan region.</u> Key partners, including Consumers Energy Foundation, Muskegon Area First, local government officials, farmers and businesses, have identified the goal of this feasibility study to assess utilizing decommissioned Consumers property on Muskegon’s deep water port and other properties for a self-sustaining facility that aggregates, processes and distributes regional foods, and create jobs in this region.</p>		

3.13.	Project Title:	Muskegon County Wastewater Management System
	Project Contact:	Muskegon County, Jonathan Wilson, 231-724-8861, wilsonjo@co.muskegon.mi.us
	Project Location:	Muskegon County
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2,3,4,5
<p>Project Summary: The Muskegon County Wastewater Management System has benefited the community for over 40 years by providing affordable sewer rates and cleaning up the Muskegon River. The system reached its highest average daily flows in the 1990s, but has declined due to a variety of factors. <u>As a result of this reduction in flow, the system has been identified as an area for growth with the goal of finding users to utilize the treatment facility as well as the adjacent land.</u> With a maximum capacity of 43 MGD, and the ability to treat high biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) waste, the treatment system is a valuable resource to both public and private users. The site is well suited for manufacturing, food processing, and other businesses. Its centralized location provides an opportunity to handle excess wastewater from surrounding communities. Additionally, the system’s proximity to the Port of Muskegon makes it an asset that will aid in efforts to market Muskegon County. The successful development of the system will; increase collaboration between governments by stabilizing treatment rates, and enhance public/private partnerships by providing low cost wastewater treatment to businesses. Additionally, development of the surrounding land will create jobs and add to the area's tax base.</p>		

3.14.	Project Title:	Oceana Non-Motorized Circle Tour
	Project Contact:	Lisa Dutcher, Ocean County, 231-873-4226, ldutcher@oceanaacrc.org
	Project Location:	Oceana County
	Criteria Addressed:	4
<p>Project Summary: <u>The proposed project, the Oceana Non-Motorized Circle Tour, consists of 22.5 miles+/- of paved road shoulders, from Monroe Road along Longbridge Road, Ridge Road to Silver Lake Drive, Silver Lake State Park to Stony Lake, and finally, Stony Lake Road to the U.S. 31 interchange.</u> With widened roads having paved shoulders, non-motorized safety issues would be greatly reduced and tourism enhanced. Additionally, this improvement would ultimately provide a safe connector to link non-motorized traffic to the William Field Memorial Hart-Montague Trail, whose 22.6 miles of stand-alone trail will undergo a \$4 million dollar restoration in 2015. It is estimated that several hundred recreationists use the Hart-Montague Trail daily, and there are few facilities alongside the trail that offer either food or water. It is for this reason, and the topography/natural beauty along Scenic Drive, we believe, that compels thousands of travelers to use this route along the Oceana coastline.</p>		

3.15.	Project Title:	Creating a Redevelopment Ready Region
	Project Contact:	City of Grand Rapids, Eric DeLong, 616-456-3119, edelong@grcity.us.gov
	Project Location:	Region 4
	Criteria Addressed:	1,4
<p>Project Summary: The Redevelopment Ready Communities® certification program supports communities to become redevelopment ready. It encourages innovative redevelopment strategies which build confidence among businesses and developers. <u>Region 4 proposes to establish best practices in the areas of planning, zoning and economic development with the long term outcome of making the region more attractive for investment.</u> Building upon Region 4’s established redevelopment ready communities, Allegan, Middleville and Muskegon, the region seeks to provide a consistent development process to provide the development community a predictable environment to invest. The initial steps would be to bring the certified communities together with those that have an interest in participating in the initial assessment and measurement against existing best practices. A consultant would conduct an assessment of the specific areas to recommend areas for adoption of best practices. Adoption of the best practices would take place over the next two-three years with the long range goal of having all communities certified as appropriate. In addition, as part of the process, real estate development feasibility studies on potential development sites in the region would be conducted, identifying areas of focus and market analysis would be conducted including demographic and stakeholder input, preliminary designs, financing opportunities, and implementation strategies.</p>		

3.16.	Project Title:	Regional River Resources Planning and Restoration
	Project Contact:	City of Grand Rapids, Eric DeLong, 616-456-3119, edelong@grcity.us.gov
	Project Location:	Jurisdictions within the West Central Region, with particular focus on the City of Grand Rapids, Kent, Ionia, Montcalm, Ottawa and Muskegon and Newaygo Counties
	Criteria Addressed:	1,4
<p>Project Summary: The proposed project would broaden the efforts of the City of Grand Rapids and LGROW to expand a regional understanding of the importance of cohesive land development and stormwater policies to improve major waterways. <u>The project would start with the Grand River restoration project in Grand Rapids, serving as a demonstration project.</u> An economic analysis is underway to quantify the recreational and environmental value of improving the Grand River. As part of the River Corridor Plan process that the City of Grand Rapids and the Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. is undertaking, the economic development potential will be evaluated. These economic reports will be used to educate communities about the value and potential of major waterways. The project component of this request would include State resources to advance scientific studies to foster the Lake Sturgeon population, address dam removal and sea lamprey barriers, and provide engineering to restore the rapids on the Grand River. Water quality is an important consideration. Without regional coordination, including education, awareness, and the dissemination of best practices, all of our efforts to increase recreation, restore habitat and leverage private development will be diminished. The program would include the creation of watershed plans for major tributaries.</p>		

3.17.	Project Title:	Improve 24 th Street
	Project Contact:	Salem Township, James Pitsch, 616-292-1739, supervisor@salemtownship.org
	Project Location:	Salem and Dorr Townships, Allegan County
	Criteria Addressed:	1
<p>Project Summary: <u>We propose building and paving 3 miles of 24th Street, between 142nd or any part thereof to be built to meet or exceed Allegan County Road Commission specifications.</u> This road is a border road between the townships of Salem and Dorr. As Dorr Township does not have funding for roads, we cannot proceed in having any type of corridor in that area of our townships. There is a large Agri-Farm business on this road and the road also serves as a corridor for the people of New Salem and the surrounding area.</p>		

3.18.	Project Title:	Tri-County Transit Connection and Enhancement Project
	Project Contact:	Muskegon County, Robert Lukens, 231-724-3103, lukensro@co.muskegon.mi.us
	Project Location:	The Muskegon/Holland/Grand Rapids Combined Statistical Area (CSA)
	Criteria Addressed:	1,2
<p>Project Summary: <u>This project would connect the Muskegon Area Transit System’s (MATS) Muskegon and Muskegon Heights Terminals to Holland’s MAX Padnos Transportation Center and the RAPID’s GVSU Connector Route in Allendale or the Central Station in downtown Grand Rapids.</u> The program would use express buses to make the connections, serving as many passengers as possible. Because the program would use existing transit facilities, operational funding would be the main request. Vehicle funding may be needed.</p> <p>The first proposed route is a Muskegon-Holland US-31 express bus originating at the MATS terminal in Muskegon, with additional stops in Muskegon Heights and Grand Haven. This route would terminate at Holland’s MAX Padnos Transportation Center. The route would enable passengers from the Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Grand Haven and Holland metro areas to connect to local transportation networks and jobs in various communities, and allow residents of these communities to connect to Amtrak’s Pere Marquette Route to Chicago and points beyond. The second proposed route is from Muskegon to Grand Rapids Central Station or the GVSU Allendale Connector Route to downtown Grand Rapids. Currently, there are no daily public transportation service routes between the counties of Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Allegan, which limits access for many people.</p>		

3.19.	Project Title:	Two-Generation Approach to Family Income Security
	Project Contact:	West Michigan Center for Arts & Technology, Nathan Salazar, 616-454-7004, Nathan.salazar@wmcats.org
	Project Location:	West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology, 98 E. Fulton St. Suite 202 Grand Rapids, MI 49503
	Criteria Addressed:	-
<p>Project Summary: The West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology (WMCAT) is partnering with The SOURCE and the State of Michigan Department of Human Services to improve income security for families. <u>A new two-generation program is being implemented this year to address barriers to employment and high school graduation.</u> WMCAT provides under and unemployed adults who receive public assistance a tuition-free career training program in medical technology fields and foster academic success in high school students.</p> <p>We are partnering with the State of Michigan and local organization The SOURCE to place a DHS retention specialist on site at WMCAT and connect WMCAT’s staff to the resources and expertise of The SOURCE’s case workers. This will give students and their families greater access to services. We are also a Michigan Benefits Access location, providing computer terminals and staff to help students access public assistance services.</p> <p>This approach can be expanded in Kent County. We are accessing the best data and peers across the country to advance this important work. Two-generation programs focus on creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both vulnerable parents and children together. We are interested in sharing our learnings and expanding the reach of this type of programming.</p>		

PRIORITIZED PROJECTS

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) met on October 10, 2014 and viewed presentations from the Tier One projects. After the presentations, the WMPA prioritized each of the six projects to arrive at the following prioritized list of projects and programs. The WMPC will focus on these projects during the second year of the Regional Prosperity Initiative.

The prioritized list of projects follows:

1. Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub
2. Protecting Lake Michigan Water Quality through Establishment of a Dedicated Revenue Stream for Watershed Management
3. Connected Community Engagement Program, Technology Action Planning
4. Michigan Work Ready Communities
5. Emerge Regional Website Portal/ E-Merge West Michigan
6. Michigan Works Strategic Redesign

A description of each of the projects begins on page 42.

NEXT STEPS

The State of Michigan has budgeted funds to continue the Regional Prosperity Initiative through 2015. The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) is applying for a second year of funding at the same rate as 2014. It is anticipated that the application will be forwarded to the State of Michigan prior to November 1, 2014 and be awarded by January 2015. The WMPA is anticipating working with the organizations that submitted the top ranked projects selected during the 2014 Planning Process. This work will include advocating for implementation of the projects and assistance in identifying partnerships and funding opportunities.

Additionally, the WMPA will expand on the Regional Prosperity Plan by further detailing assets across the 13 counties. This may include bringing new people and/or organizations to the table, updating information, or developing new information to promote prosperity.

Finally, as time and resources permit, the WMPA will strive to assist the other projects submitted during the 2014 Planning Process by identifying opportunities for those submitting projects to collaborate with other similar organizations or initiatives.

CONCLUSIONS

While it is difficult to draw conclusions related to an ongoing process, there are several points that merit consideration.

The first point, apparent throughout the planning process, relates to the benefit of getting people and organizations together. While there were a few rough spots leading up to the process, once the process was underway, everyone involved fully collaborated. The Steering Committee represented a wide range of areas and the people involved not only shared their ideas, but learned about organizations that they might not have interacted with prior to the Regional Prosperity Initiative. While it may not always be necessary for those serving on the Steering Committee to collaborate on every future project, it's nice to know that collaboration is possible.

Another point that became apparent during the planning process is that there is no single project that will lead to greater prosperity in West Michigan. The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) solicited projects with the hopes that the freedom to create a project without limitations would lead to innovative and projects with region-wide impact. While the projects that were submitted all have value, it will take a while for people and organizations to comprehend developing a project that benefits a 13 county area with over 1.5 million people. This will be the greatest task of the WMPA.