

Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative

REQUEST FOR FUNDING

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Region #4 Regional Prosperity *Initiative Communications Committee* is requesting the approval of \$30,000 to fund the creation of a foundational communication platform for the initiative and establish a basic level of communication between the public, members, and member constituents. The plan's foundational platform will enable easy future enhancements without requiring rework. The plan includes both digital and print deliverables to ensure a multimedia approach for public communication. The funding request will be used to contract with external communication providers, internal project management, technology solutions, and print deliverables.

The plan will position the Region #4 Collaborative as a leader in the state in providing transparent communication with all participating parties. This plan advances a goal of open communications between the Region #4 Collaborative, the West Michigan public, and its members' constituents.

STATEMENT OF NEED

For the Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative to succeed, two communication goals must be achieved:

- 1.) Establish open, transparent communication with the public, among its members, and its members' constituents;
- 2.) Promote regional and constituent support and engagement by extending communications down through each constituent group from which they represent.

To successfully achieve this, several new communication tools must be established and put in place, including: a region 4 website, annual report, information documents, and more. Public and constituent engagement and support will be critical to the success of the Region #4 Collaborative and the projects the group funds and supports. Without support, improvement projects risk increase public challenges and scrutiny, leading to unnecessary conflict and possible project delays.

GOALS & DELIVERABLES

GOALS

The following are overall goals for the Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative in 2014/2015.

1. Link the regional partners together regarding messaging and communication of the Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative (ie. External Communication "Hub").
 - a. **Success Metric:** *Establishment of a Basecamp Hub for all members of the initiative by September 2014.*
2. Formal announcement of the launch to build awareness of the Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative and define the importance of the initiative (ie. "begin the conversation") to identified audiences.
 - a. **Success Metric:** *Media release and coverage of the Region #4 Collaborative and hosting of local meetings in 8-10 "community hubs" around West Michigan by December 2014.*
3. Establish a performance dashboard of progress and annual goals for public consumption.
 - a. **Success Metric:** *Publicly publish a 5-year regional prosperity plan and regional economic development blueprint for Region #4 with metrics of success by June 2015.*

DELIVERABLES

The following are deliverables for the Region #4 Regional Prosperity Initiative in 2014/2015.

1. **Press Release Template**
 - a. Establish a press release template for public releases from the Region #4 Collaborative
2. **Editorial Review Meetings**
 - a. Conduct 2-4 editorial review meetings with West Michigan regional media outlets on the Regional Prosperity Initiative and the Region #4 Collaborative.
3. **Overview Sheet**
 - a. Construct a 2-page basic overview sheet on the collaborative that can be shared with the public and media outlets.
4. **Website**
 - a. Establish a website presence for the transparent communication of projects and initiatives happening within the Region #4 Collaborative.
5. **Quarterly eNewsletter**
 - a. Launch a quarterly eNewsletter dedicated to communicating projects and initiatives with interested parties of the Region #4 Collaborative.
6. **Community Hub Meetings**
 - a. Conduct 8-10 meet and greet informational meetings in community hubs around West Michigan.

BUDGET

Deliverable	Cost	Quantity	Total
Press Release Template	\$1,500	1	\$1,500
Editorial Review Meetings	\$500	4	\$2,000
Overview Sheet	\$2,500 design + \$500 printing	500	\$3,000
Website	\$12,500	1	\$12,500
Quarterly eNewsletter	\$1,500	4	\$6,000
Community Hub Meetings	\$500	10	\$5,000
Total Budget:			\$30,000

** all costs include both hard deliverable costs and project management time.*

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 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 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 – The large geographic area served by the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance creates issues related to equity and competition between different areas of the Region.

Goal #2 – Determine if the 13 County Prosperity Alliance should be divided into smaller Prosperity Regions.

Actions

- Determine, through discussions with existing organizations, which long-established boundaries work, and which have challenges.
- Work with the State of Michigan and the Federal Government to determine issues related to realignment of boundaries.
- Determine what other Prosperity Regions are doing related to the issue of sub-regions.

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 (CEDDS) 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 tier 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.

Like the other projects, the third tier of projects will be included in the Prosperity Plan. The

projects will receive letters of support and any other assistance that the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance can provide to help the applicants move their projects forward.

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, Strategies, and Funding Options

The following seven projects are listed in no particular order. Two of the projects (1.2.A and 1.2.B) will eventually be combined, but at this time are shown separately.

West Michigan Prosperity Alliance – Regional Prosperity Plan – July 8, 2014 DRAFT

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>		

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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>		

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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, tsbil@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 <i>FoodWorks</i>.</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. When complete, this will be the best sunset on the planet!</u></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. 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>		