Recommendations for Adapting Planning Practice to the Knowledge Economy

Excerpt from the

Michigan Knowledge Economy Index:
A County-Level Assessment of Michigan’s Knowledge Economy

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A Checklist of Possible Strategic Actions for Local Communities and Regions

Planning for Knowledge Jobs

☐ In the knowledge economy, an educated citizenry is critical to success. If a community does not get smarter it will get poorer.

☐ A community should provide educational opportunities across the life-span of the workforce.

☐ Begin with early childhood development with a seamless transition to k-12, higher education, career development and retraining programs.

☐ Establish a business/education roundtable as a regular forum for businesses to discuss education and training needs and for education to discuss program challenges, curriculum options and resources

☐ Develop “technology education centers” designed to train participants on relevant technologies of interest to the local community.

☐ Recapture high school graduates that leave the area for higher education through strategies such as forgiving student loans, promote local alumni networks, and welcome home events.

Planning for Innovation

☐ Establish a technology business incubator.

☐ Create flexible investment funds to make capital available to emerging enterprises/technologies/entrepreneurs.

☐ Support and entrepreneurial environment that values risk takers and innovators.

☐ Provide broadband access.

☐ Host business/community “innovation fairs.”

☐ Provide patent assistance.

☐ Establish links to higher education technology centers in your region to facilitate the location/expansion of innovative enterprises to your community.

☐ Establish a “speaker’s bureau” of informed community leaders who can help spread the word on the global knowledge economy and its potential challenges and opportunities for your community.

☐ Create a “technical assistance network” that can provide low or no cost preliminary consultation to local businesses on incorporating technology within their enterprise.
Planning for a Digital Economy

- Link homes, schools, businesses and government to the global internet and to each other.
- Create a community/business/government web presence.
- Provide broadband access where currently not available.
- Provide wireless access where appropriate.
- Provide non-formal adult education programs for residents on the global communications network.
- Map your community's global communications network.
- Use digital communications to support democratic governance in your community.
- Provide technical and financial assistance for residents and businesses to improve and expand their access to the digital economy.
- Require open capacity on any fiber optic infrastructure that constructed for future public and private uses.

Planning for Globalization

- Facilitate export trade and global markets for existing products and services in your community (remember Canada is a Michigan neighbor)
- Identify existing exporting firms and identify related local industries that may also export to similar markets
- Consider attracting foreign based firms to your community in strategic and complementary industries
- Link to Michigan foreign trade zones.
- Identify and describe your community’s global transportation capacity and share that with your local businesses.
- Identify and celebrate local ethnic/cultural heritages and explore possible international social capital opportunities.
- Conduct an “Industry Cluster Analysis” to assess possible global linkages and opportunities
- Organize and conduct training for key industry personnel and entrepreneurs on international trade and working in a culturally diverse economy
Planning for Dynamism

☐ Establish effective communications amongst firms to anticipate change and develop responses.

☐ Supportive transition strategies for your community’s workforce.

☐ Identify “new enterprises” in your community to assess potential emerging trends in your local economy.

☐ Implement “safety net” strategies for displaced workers and families to reduce personal stress and improve retention of skilled workers.

☐ Run business “birth announcements” in the local paper.

☐ Support strong entrepreneurial development programs to help new businesses form and expand locally.

☐ Provide access to a variety of types of capital for businesses.

☐ Build or rebuild “flexible space” environments that can be reused for a variety of production and services.

☐ Support local business incubator programs.

☐ Identify leakages in the local economy that may provide opportunities for business development.

☐ Examine alternative forms of business ownership in potential business closures.