

Advancing White County: Preserving the past while strategically planning for a promising future for all citizens through mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.



To: *Advancing White County Steering Committee*
From: Kelly Lyon, Advancing White County Project Manager
Date: September 9, 2009
Re: September Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

I. Introductions

Judge Michael Lincoln provided opening remarks, and introduced himself and Searcy Mayor Belinda LaForce as the co-chairs for *Advancing White County*. He announced that Governor Beebe would be holding a meeting in White County on Friday, September 4.

II. Overview of Arkansas Works Initiative

Kelly Lyon, Project Manager, explained that the Governor's visit would revolve around his Arkansas Works Initiative, which is an effort to get all 75 Arkansas counties to complete an assessment and strategic plan. White County is on the Governor's radar because of efforts to achieve this goal through Advancing White County. Mayor LaForce is listed on the Arkansas Works website as a County Coordinator.

Because Governor Beebe repeatedly references the strong relationship between education and economic development, the institutions of higher education in the county will play a major role in the strategic planning process.

III. Overview of Smart Practices

Kelly explained that community development is about preparing the "product", which is your community or region. This is done by focusing on improvements in human and physical capital. Economic development is marketing your community through a marketing plan and strong business retention, expansion, and attraction strategies. A community should split its time fairly evenly between the two. After an assessment is prepared, the community can decide what it wants to realistically achieve. Planning and implementation should be a total team approach—everyone in the county has a role to play.

IV. Overview of Assessment Phase

Amy Whitehead will do a lot of the ground work for the assessment phase. Amy explained that the assessment will go above and beyond what the Governor is calling for in the Arkansas Works Initiative. A comprehensive look at the county's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will occur. The final assessment document will provide a basis for making shared decisions, and can be used for the county's marketing efforts. The document can also be a resource when the county is responding to a request for information from an outside company or the state.

Data will be collected through a driving tour, business survey, research, and one-on-one interviews. Areas of focus will be the economic, political, and business climate; education; workforce; quality of life; and utilities, land, and resource availability. The assessment phase is scheduled to last through November.

V. Questions & Comments

A question was asked about the feasibility of hiring a person for the implementation phase. Kelly indicated communities use different approaches, sometimes if the resources are available they'll hire a person because someone ultimately has to be responsible for the project, but there also things that can be done in the implementation phase if the resources are not available to hire an individual. She indicated she was uncertain, at this point, if UCA's Center for Community and Economic Development would have the capacity to handle the implementation phase. Judge Lincoln indicated his vision is that the 16 mayors will work together to find the resources to hire someone to lead implementation.

Please send comments or corrections to amyw@uca.edu or 501.852.2930 by September 21, 2009.