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INTRODUCTION

Many times economic developers, planning officials and citizen groups think that once their plans are completed, their work is done. The community, region or state who does not take the implementation process as seriously as composing the plan itself will be disappointed -- their plan will begin to "gather dust on a shelf." Implementation should be seen as an integral part of the planning process, not as an after-thought or even an option.

The first part of the goal-setting process was about the "whats." That's a shorthand way of saying the state is establishing a set of long-range goals. That part of the process is encompassed by the document, *West Virginia: A Vision Shared!* Economic Development Strategy. This document contains the vision for the preferred future for West Virginia. Additionally, there are four issue areas, each with five corresponding goals, which are outlined. These issue areas were identified through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The goals were then established to move the state forward, while addressing the bigger issues facing West Virginia.

The second part of the overall process is about the "hows" -- finding the right set of implementation strategies to achieve the ambitious goals that were established. That is contained in this document. The strategy and this implementation plan should be viewed as companion pieces. The action items proposed here are what must happen to begin to address -- and accomplish -- the goals of the strategy. It is important to understand and remember that each and every action in this plan serves to move the state towards the vision of its preferred future.

The action items contained in this plan are being proposed by the West Virginia Council for Community and Economic Development. The Council is proposing these actions, and is willing to take the lead in moving West Virginia forward in the new economy. However, not all of these actions can be undertaken or performed by the Council itself. Many of the actions are complicated. Some will take several years to implement, and need multiple partners along the way. On the other hand, some are less intensive, and can be accomplished in short order. Additionally, some items merit further study that should be undertaken to determine the appropriate actions.

The Council and its partners are ready to take action to make West Virginia a better place. There is a wide variety of action steps proposed in this implementation plan. The Council seeks active collaboration with other stakeholders. In truth, the Council cannot make the needed changes in West Virginia to make it more competitive -- and a great place to live and play -- without the participation of all West Virginians. These proposed action steps are meant to equip the state with the necessary tools and resources to embrace and flourish in the changes that the transition to the 21st Century brings.

This implementation plan is a living document. Detailed specific actions are enumerated for the next year. It is understood that many of these projects will take years to fully accomplish. But, we must start now. Governor Underwood's assistance in funding this work shows a

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commitment to the need to meet the challenges of the new economy. There is a great opportunity with the many partners who assisted in the creation of the strategy and action plan, including the hundreds of citizens who participated and gave their ideas regarding their hopes for West Virginia, to move the state forward. With the help of Governor-elect Wise and the West Virginia Legislature, West Virginia can make the leap necessary to be competitive in the new economy.

All of the items mentioned here are important and work in conjunction with each other. However, tremendous effort and emphasis is given to year one activity. Year two to five steps will be reviewed and evaluated over time.

COUNCIL'S ACTION PRIORITIES

The following actions are Council-specific, meaning these items do not necessitate the involvement of other partners to implement these items. The purpose of establishing specific actions that the Council itself will undertake is to serve as a role model for "doing things differently" -- a potential consensus builder among partners, and throughout the state at the grassroots-level. The Council understands that change must begin "at home."

The Council is committed to implementing these actions within the first year.

1. Modify membership

The Council will undertake efforts to make the composition of membership more diverse. The membership needs to be expanded to 17 members. The Council will recommend to the Governor that the stakeholders identified as potentially needing to be at the table include labor, minorities, entrepreneurs, education, and non-profits. The Council also wants to add two legislators to the Council as ex-officio members.

2. Study/Evaluate state's economic development structure and programming

The process that has resulted in this implementation plan did include an evaluation of West Virginia's community and economic development delivery system. However, it was not within the scope of this project to make recommendations as to structure, funding and programming. This is the next logical step in this ongoing process to make the state's economic development efforts more efficient, effective, and, ultimately, more competitive.

3. Establish benchmarks

While the performance measures suggested at the end of this document are long-term, specific benchmarks need to be established. The Council will direct this effort in deciding what the targets are for where West Virginia wants to be in year one, year two, and beyond. Benchmarks are an important element, as efforts must be measured in order for success or failure to be judged. Additionally, benchmarks provide the needed barometer for how far West Virginia has come -- and still needs to go -- at any given time.

4. Institute annual evaluation of progress

The Council will begin to undertake an annual evaluation process to judge progress. Using the benchmarks that will be established, along with the suggested performance measures, and baseline information from this project, the Council will be able to report on successes accurately. Additionally, the Council will hire an outside, objective party to direct this evaluation in order to include an assessment of the Council's activities.

5. *Create website*

The Council will create its own website for dual purposes. First, as an information clearinghouse of sorts on this effort, using the website to keep stakeholders informed and involved in this ongoing process. Second, as a central resource for people both inside and outside the state to remain abreast of economic and community development policy and strategy within West Virginia.

6. *Institute annual summit for stakeholders*

A summit of stakeholders will be hosted by the Council annually. Approximately 400 West Virginians have participated in this process to date, including business leaders, community leaders, labor, education, non-profits, citizen activists and economic development professionals. The Council strongly believes that these people should remain involved, and continue to provide feedback and guidance to the Council on priorities and needed actions.

YEAR ONE ACTIONS

I. INTELLECTUAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY***Educational Attainment***

Too many of West Virginia's children do not go on to post-secondary education. Additionally, many of the brightest and best go elsewhere to college, and in many cases, never return. Clearly, the new economy calls for education beyond high school.

1. The state needs to expand the PROMISE Scholarship Program to fund all qualified students to attend any of the state's four year public universities. As well as ensuring that all high school graduates have access to one or two year associates degrees and certificates program. This proposal is modeled after Georgia's HOPE Scholarship Program. Several methods of funding the program have been discussed, including the use of gray machine proceeds.
2. Provide cash awards of \$500 to anyone over the age of 35 that obtains a GED. Many of these West Virginians are held back in the new economy by the lack of a high school education. This award will be available to 1,000 citizens per year.
3. Develop programs to further provide interaction between educators, students and business, such as Partners in Education. Making these connections and effectively disseminating this information will help all levels of education shape their curriculums to deliver qualified workers to the marketplace.
4. Increase the coverage of the West Virginia Access Center for Higher Education program to increase the college-going rate. The program identifies barriers to higher education and works with public higher education institutions, local public schools, and students to break down those barriers, increasing the percentage of high school graduates that enroll in college.

Worker Training

Training -- whether it be on-the-job, skills upgrades, or basic employability -- is a priority for employers and training providers alike in the New Economy. This type of training usually involves a skilled worker gaining more advanced skill sets, or adapting to changes in technology, which have in turn, changed their job. The goal of worker training is to make sure employees have the skills necessary to enhance productivity, improve performance and/or retain employment.

1. The state of West Virginia needs a dedicated post secondary technical education system. The state is decades behind many competing states. This system needs to be demand-driven and results-based. It is not to be utilized as a feeder system for the four-year universities. This is the next logical step following Senate Bill 653 in refocusing existing post-secondary resources. The Community College Workforce Development Program (HB3009) and the Governor's Guaranteed Workforce Program (GGFWP) are good

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beginnings. They cannot possibly serve the ever-changing needs of the current and future business community. The Council proposes the focusing of all adult education, GED course work, and all worker training under a single system. The South Carolina Technical College System should be used as the model.

Research and Development

Clearly research and development is driving the national economy. West Virginia has had only sporadic efforts in the area, and has not realized its potential. What is needed is a clear, concise and coordinated public/private partnership. The state's research universities need to focus in on a narrow range to add value to the state's future economy. The Council believes there are two worthy models to consider: the Georgia Research Alliance and Pennsylvania's Ben Franklin Partnership.

While West Virginia's version will be unique, there are certain principles that need to be accepted.

1. The alliance/partnership will be an independent private non-profit created by the state.
2. The majority of its board will be business CEOs with the Presidents of West Virginia University, Marshall University, and other key universities and colleges in the state at the table.
3. The entity must have sustained funding over a period of ten years.

II. NEW ECONOMY: NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

Diversify Economy

This recommendation combines several key operational needs of the West Virginia Development Office. As *Market Street Services* has pointed out, many states have greatly increased their state level economic and community development programs. West Virginia is simply not competitive. Several key programs need to be enhanced (or created); these are not listed in any priority order.

1. The Office's existing business and industry program needs to be upgraded with the Governor playing a major role in talking to state's top CEOs.
2. The Office's targeting industry effort needs to be reassessed and reduced to five targets, focusing on sectors providing high value, quality jobs. Staff and marketing resources should be reallocated accordingly.
3. A \$10 million Sunny Day Fund needs to be established to provide funds to "close deals," with the Governor and the Council controlling the funds with strict criteria for their usage.
4. The Office's export efforts should be expanded by adding staff and funding for further export missions.
5. The Film Office should be expanded to two or three staff, with additional financial support. Consideration should be given to appointing a West Virginia Film Council/Commission to assist and promote the industry in the state.
6. Create a continuing communications program with West Virginia natives and college graduates who hold key corporate positions. This program would include personal visitations by the Governor.
7. Every effort needs to be made to tie the tourism and economic development efforts together. Joint projects and staff coordination and cooperation should be the norm.

Capital Formation

The availability of capital is vital to business success. West Virginia and other rural states have always had problems in this area. The Council sees important changes that can improve West Virginia's capacity.

1. Amend the West Virginia Capital Company Act (WV Code 5E-1) to establish and perpetuate a developmental seed capital fund in West Virginia that would be managed by the West Virginia Economic Development Authority (WVEDA) and its board. Tax credits would still be offered to the private sector in return for their investment being placed, and managed, by the WVEDA. Some form of preference should be given to

Year One Actions

Small Business Investment Corporations (SBICs), and emphasis should be placed on technology companies.

2. Every effort should be made to have a “one-stop” shop for all West Virginia’s finance programs. A single board (like WVEDA) should oversee all the operations.
3. The creation of a statewide SBIC should be evaluated in order to leverage available federal dollars.

Increase Entrepreneurship

Job creation in this country is coming primarily from medium and small companies. The new economy is being fueled by an amazing push by entrepreneurs. West Virginia has a great opportunity to build on its recent success in small business creation. A concerted effort to foster small businesses must be given top priority. Building on existing programs, the Council proposes the following as a comprehensive approach:

1. Increase the staff component and operational funding of the Small Business Development Centers statewide.
2. Create a statewide system of regional small business incubators. (The State of Mississippi’s system could be used as a model.)
3. Support the development of regional entrepreneurial forums by collaborating Small Business Development Centers, chambers of commerce, development authorities, higher education, West Virginia Rural Development Councils, and entrepreneurs, with the full range of capital investors (angel funding to banks), and support functions.
4. Create the West Virginia Loan Guarantee Program to leverage SBA 504 and other programs.
5. Create a small business ombudsman staff inside the Development Office to streamline state forms and permits required for small businesses, and to serve as a resource center.
6. Working with the Governor and Secretary of State, create one-stop service for small business. Utilizing the Internet, an effective website, and the latest technology is a necessary component.

III. RESULTS-BASED GOVERNMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Government Reform

As the recent *Market Street Services* report reveals, West Virginia has too many "negatives" in its business climate assessment. A key area in which the state receives low marks is in two nationally accepted studies concerning workers compensation. While the Council acknowledges progress in the mid-1990s, there remains much to do. A sequence of steps over a period of years is necessary for the state to be fully competitive. There is a need to understand that there are short-term and long-term solutions necessary.

1. The Governor and the Legislature should consider a variety of structural options. Among those should be a quasi-government insurance corporation with an independent oversight board with a majority elected by policyholders. There would be a split membership of regular subscribers and self-insured firms.
2. No matter what structure is utilized, a professional, experienced insurance administrator is needed to improve the operations of the system and will serve under contract to the State of West Virginia. A competitive salary package must be available for the chosen professional.
3. Adequate rates must be maintained by statute.

NOTE: The Council believes that the state needs to pay competitive salaries to attract quality individuals in its key management positions. These Secretaries and Commissioners need to be compensated at the level of competing states and comparable private sector positions.

Infrastructure Development

West Virginia has struggled for years with the creation of quality sites across the state. Today's infrastructure not only includes the traditional water, sewer and roads, but also includes telecommunications.

1. Issuance of \$100 million of bonds for infrastructure development with an emphasis on job creation and economic development.

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Healthy Citizens

One of the keys to West Virginia's attractiveness is providing quality health care to its current and future citizens. Medical costs in the state are an issue for businesses and workers alike. Many areas are losing their doctors, and some hospitals are in trouble. Additionally, West Virginians have alarming disease and death rates that must be lowered.

1. Reorganize and stabilize the Public Employee Insurance Agency to address the budget deficits and to create solvency.
2. Insure maximum utilization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIPs) and other programs so as to assure that all children are provided health insurance.

IV. BUILDING BRIDGES AND EMPOWERING CITIZENS

Regional Cooperation

The need to work across city and county lines is key to West Virginia's future. Regionalism is working well in many states. It is particularly important to make effective and efficient use of our limited resources. What is necessary is to create a series of "incentives" to encourage regional cooperation in community and economic development.

The Council proposes the following program changes as a beginning:

1. Counties participating in the creation of multi-county business/industrial parks and other projects need to be able to share the property tax/sales tax revenue on a simple contract basis.
2. Multi-county business/industrial parks will have first priority for all sources of funding infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, and telecommunications.
3. Multi-county development authorities (three or more counties) will be eligible for a minimum of \$100,000 per county from the state in lieu of the previous \$30,000 Local Economic Development Program grant.
4. The West Virginia Development Office will assign top-level staff to assist regional partnerships and locate technical staff in the field as needed.

Image Improvement

West Virginia has many positives and much to offer future citizens and companies. However, it suffers from a negative image, both internally and externally. The Council believes that this issue must be dealt with in a powerful program beginning right away. Advertising, marketing and tourism promotion and development represents a vital part of this effort. The natural beauty of West Virginia must be "sold" to both the visitor and the businessperson.

The Council proposes the following action steps.

1. Create an enhanced marketing and advertising program that is coordinated and presents a unified image for both tourism and economic development.
2. Launch a continuing, professionally managed national public relations campaign to enhance the state's image.
3. Create an internal positive campaign to educate West Virginians on the many positive aspects of the state.
4. Create a "Home Town" program for smaller communities to enhance their downtown areas.

YEAR ONE FURTHER STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Three issues requiring further study are also part of the first year action plan.

NEW ECONOMY: NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

Restructure Incentives

- Over the years, the state has accumulated a number of incentives, mostly directed at historically important industry groups. There is a need to look carefully at other states' programs, and to refocus West Virginia's incentives on quality job growth and the new economy. This work should be completed in 2001, and be ready for legislative consideration upon completion.

RESULTS-BASED GOVERNMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

New Tax Structure

- West Virginia's tax structure for business needs to be changed. Research is underway to quantify the Fair Taxation Study done in 1998. Once that work is complete, the Governor needs to evaluate the findings and determine the needed changes to move the state forward. West Virginia cannot prosper in the new economy under the current structure.

Prevailing Wages

- The current method of computing the prevailing wage needs study. A review of other states and clear statistics on the costs of public projects would allow the Legislature to fairly consider the issue.

YEAR TWO TO FIVE ACTIONS

As important as the first action steps proposed for year one are, they are only the beginning. The Council believes that sustained continued action is necessary for West Virginia to move ahead. What follows are the action items for year two through five.

I. INTELLECTUAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Educational Attainment

- Establish minimum competency standards for graduation from elementary, middle and high schools, while allowing state higher education institutions to recover costs for remedial education from school districts.

Technical Education

- Target the projected five largest shortages of technical degrees and certifications in the United States for the next ten years, and implement those training programs at the community/technical colleges.

Worker Training

- A training/retraining grant of up to \$7,500 per worker should be available requiring the worker to remain in West Virginia for two years, and the employer to pay a salary of at least 125% of the state's average wage for that sector. This grant would be available to both new and expanding companies. A maximum of 1,000 workers per year can be served. Retail jobs are not eligible for the grant.
- Make funds available on a competitive basis to the Council for Community and Economic Development to provide the equipment needs of the community and technical colleges for local business training.

Research and Development

- Following the creation of a R&D-focused public/private partnership in Year One, begin funding the three R&D programs similar to the State Smart plan, i.e., Basic Research Fund, Collaborative Research and Development Fund, and Commercialization Development Fund. Sponsored research would carry a retained equity interest in its commercialization with the ultimate goal for the corporation to be self-supporting. Private investors will receive tax credits equal to their investment (with a cap) spread out over five years.

Lifelong Learning

- Collaborate the public/private and non-profit sectors to deploy underutilized resources outside of business hours to offer adult education and lifelong learning opportunities.

II. NEW ECONOMY: NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

Diversify Economy

- Develop strategies for leveraging federal assets, upstream and downstream, especially targeted at fields of excellence, i.e., information assurance (FBI), energy (National Energy Technology Lab), technology transfer (National Technology Transfer Center), etc.

Capital Formation

- Provide tax incentives to taxpayers who invest in small, R&D and technology-oriented firms similar to Ohio's Technology Investment Tax Credit program.
- Make a concentrated effort to develop interest from capital companies that are seeking to capitalize upon the opportunities surrounding West Virginia's higher education institutions coupled with the other "essential, important, and desirable criteria" for the high-tech industry location/relocation/growth decisions.

Restructure Incentives

- Align tax and non-tax incentives to *West Virginia: A Vision Shared!* Economic Development Strategy, and link all incentives with performance-based requirements.

III. RESULTS-BASED GOVERNMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Government Reform

- Establish a closer tie between the Council for Economic and Community Development (West Virginia Development Office) and the West Virginia Tourism Commission (West Virginia Division of Tourism) providing for joint marketing efforts and infrastructure development.

Infrastructure Development

- Create a brownfield and abandoned site development program modeled on Pennsylvania's Land Recycling Program, focusing on the elements of corporate liability and state incentives.
- Redirect and refund the monies available to the West Virginia Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council towards regional projects and mandatory job creation requirements. A new bond issue or allocation of "gray machine" funds will be necessary.
- Institute an "economic development rate" for utilities for new and expanding businesses through the Public Service Commission. This rate would be limited to large users. Also, the Commission needs to allow the utilities to build the cost of future expansions into the rate base.
- Complete a statewide telecommunications infrastructure plan to be overseen by the Council.

New Tax Structure

- Offer enhanced incentives for headquarter relocations.

Land-Use Planning

- Offer state planning grants to encourage Regional Planning Councils to increase their activities in partnership with professional planners and higher educational planning programs to focus on comprehensive regional planning.

Healthy Citizens

- Review malpractice liability insurance and lower malpractice costs in the state.
- Increase public outreach efforts to educate citizens on the importance of preventative care. Utilize community college and university students in teaching proper diet, disease factors, how to improve health into the retirement years beginning at an early age, etc. A particular focus should be placed on pre-natal care and pediatric visits.
- Improve coordination among early childhood programs to improve linkages among human services, health and education.
- Consider the elimination of the health care provider tax.
- Provide more rails to trails and bicycle paths along highways.

IV. BUILDING BRIDGES AND EMPOWERING CITIZENS

Regional Cooperation

- Expand the role of the Regional Planning and Development Councils in community capacity building and economic development.

Leadership Development

- Rework Leadership West Virginia into a stronger, more inclusive leadership training organization. Increase resources to enable more participants, and strengthen the alumni activities to create a real culture of leadership within the state. Additionally, incorporate economic development training for all participants.
- Create an economic development academy required for all elected officials to attend. The Georgia Academy for Economic Development should be used as a model, and elements about the changes in economic development, the new economy, and the Council's activities should be included.
- Create a formal leadership program that targets youth, ranging from teenagers to young professionals in their early twenties, as members. In conjunction, establish networking opportunities to bring young leaders together with the established structure of leaders to facilitate the communication of employment opportunities and showcasing the youth's skills and abilities.
- Create incentives for higher levels of participation and leadership by offering new businesses locating in the state, or existing businesses that expand, reduced rates for membership at key organizations, such as chambers of commerce, Rotary Clubs, statewide membership associations, etc.

Public/Private Collaboration

- Create state-industry-university partnership similar to Ohio's Thomas Edison Program to encourage technology providers and users to create commercial opportunities.

Image Improvement

- Conduct a continuing educational effort to educate West Virginians about the many state assets and positive efforts. Institute an ambassador program for those citizens who are in contact with the public frequently.

Increase Non-Profit Capacity

- Inventory the existing non-profits throughout the state. In conjunction, create a database with each non-profit's focus, funding, service area, population served, and other pertinent information; make this database available to all non-profits to encourage partnering.
- Increase technical assistance available to non-profits throughout the state, including applied research, management training, fundraising, collaboration strategies, planning and working with volunteers, among others.

Year Two to Five Actions

- Create competitive grant funds that would be provided to non-profits assisting in areas that address the vision and goals of the *West Virginia: A Vision Shared!* Economic Development Strategy.
- Broaden and expand the Neighborhood Investment Program to include non-profits beyond the scope of those classified as serving only under-privileged and impoverished citizens.

YEAR TWO TO FIVE FURTHER STUDY AND ANALYSIS

There are four issues that are also part of the second to fifth year action plan requiring further study.

RESULTS-BASED GOVERNMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Government Reform

- Unlike any other state, West Virginia's Supreme Court expends over 60% of its case time on workers' compensation cases. There is a need to consider the creation of an Appeals Board to hear workers' compensation cases.
- There is a need to review and consider judicial reform, including the method of selection.
- Request Legislative Interim Committees to address the issues of home rule and annexation. Since West Virginia does not currently have home rule, cities and counties are not allowed certain powers. Annexation is a closely corresponding issue. The impacts and ramifications of allowing cities and counties to adopt home rule and expand annexation powers needs further study.

BUILDING BRIDGES AND EMPOWERING CITIZENS

Regional Cooperation

- There is wide ranging support for the further study and investigation of the consolidation of services among the 55 counties within the state. Implications range from infrastructure needs to school administration to tax bases. A study of the effects of consolidation of county structures to more regional alliances is merited.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The overall performance measures for the companion piece, *West Virginia: A Vision Shared!* Economic Development Strategy's success are clear. While many of them will require some years to improve, they must be measured annually.

I. INTELLECTUAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

1. High School Graduation Rate
2. SAT Test Scores
3. College Completion Rate
4. Attendance at Two-Year Colleges
5. Drop-Out Rate
6. GED Attainment Rate
7. Improvement in Primary and Secondary Education Test Scores

II. NEW ECONOMY: NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW SOLUTIONS

1. Per Capita Income Increases
2. Exports by State-Based Firms
3. Small Business Creation Rate
4. Existing Business Investments
5. Tourism Visitation and Expenditures
6. Retail Sales Tax Revenues
7. Reduction in Poverty Rate

III. RESULTS-BASED GOVERNMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

1. Business Tax Reform
2. Changes in Workers' Compensation Ratings
3. Reduction in Medical Costs
4. Reduction in Teen Pregnancy
5. Investment in Local/Regional Infrastructure Development
6. Reduction in Infant Mortality Rate
7. Per Capita Tax Burden

IV. BUILDING BRIDGES AND EMPOWERING CITIZENS

1. Increase in Non-Profits Statewide
2. Creation of Regional Economic Development Groups
3. Number of Home Town Communities
4. Consolidation of Area Governments/Services/School Districts
5. Increase in Number of Public/Private Collaborations Statewide
6. Changes in National Livability Ratings
7. Improved External Image of the State