



Vision Shared Research and Commercialization Committee

Launch Meeting, Charleston

10 a.m., Jan. 12, 2011

Participants: Anne Barth, Kevin DiGregorio, Russ Lorince (chairman) and Juliet A. Terry

By Phone: Marcel Fortin, Jon Gensler, Stephen Kopp, Cheryl Moore, Emily Wall

Russ Lorince convened the meeting.

Juliet provided some background about how the new Vision Shared committees came to be and explained how Vision Shared is trying to align with concurrent efforts by having those board members who are leading other groups also lead the new VS committees (i.e. Russ with TechConnect, Wayne Morgan with WIC, Jeff James with Create WV).

Russ discussed research and commercialization in West Virginia and how the state has made real strides in growing our research capacity at colleges and universities. He talked about NETL's new funding. Where the state has been lacking is in the ability to take that kind of activity and build commercial opportunities.

Kevin DiGregorio said this is about getting products and services into the marketplace.

Cheryl Moore said she is interested in this because she is from Wheeling, where they have NTTC and CET and she hoped those assets would have produced more commercialization. Russ said the NTTC is one of the state's first assets in this area.

Russ took everyone through a quick overview of TechConnect's blueprint for technology-based economic development. He said the TechConnect organizers realized West Virginia needed an unbiased look at TBED, and with Benedum funding, had the Battelle Institute perform a gal analysis and then strategic plan for TBED in WB. The blueprint was released in March 2009 and provided a roadmap of strategies and actions needed to get more high-tech products and services into the marketplace.

The Blueprint identified four goal areas for WV that TechConnect has made their platforms: Advanced Energy and Related Technology, Advanced Materials and Chemicals, Identification Technology and Sensing, Biosciences/Biotechnology. Russ said TechConnect is trying to find ways to promote business development of these areas and support entrepreneurs. WV needs assistance, leadership and capital resources (i.e. labs, research parks) and "soft" resources to incent and support development.

Kevin provided an update of some of TechConnect's activities to date. Russ explained that TechConnect's purpose is not to be a provider of services itself but rather an integrator or convener.

Juliet asked about some of their more immediate goals. Russ said they have six points right now. While Battelle had said West Virginia needs to spend \$80 million to build capacity in each of the platform areas, TechConnect has asked the state for \$3 million in commitment on several different fronts. Last year they focused on securing a \$250,000 investment from the development office to get the implementation rolling – they didn't receive it last year, and they are asking again.

Kevin discussed how other states fund TBED. He said in Ohio, in spite of massive state debt, the discussion was whether spend up to \$900 million on TBED. So even states struggling economically are still funding TBED. It has a payback as high as \$18 for every \$1 of investment.

Anne Barth said TechConnect's goal is to enhance the understanding of all this, which is an area where Vision Shared can help.

Dr. Kopp said if you look at research in West Virginia at WVU and Marshall, the strategic use of funds for this match perfectly with their activities. He said the model of matching private gifts is a perfect example of what can be done when public and private sectors partner.

To define what Vision Shared can bring to the table, Russ said he sees roles in communications, education and advocacy. Juliet added lobbying to that list.

Russ said TBED efforts had no real support from Gov. Manchin. Tomblin may be more receptive. Juliet said they should make an effort for more face time with key legislators and committees. Russ asked what other audiences they also should be seeking out.

Kevin said the general public needs to get excited about TBED. Ohio voters said YES to \$700 million in TBED funding.

Dr. Kopp said he is willing to do anything we can to champion research and commercialization. He said it took Kentucky three legislative cycles to fund their Bucks for Brains initiative at the \$300-\$400 million level. We need a long-term plan for the redevelopment of West Virginia's economy. We need to tell lawmakers they'll need to be patient and trust that this model works.

Russ agreed that the time element is important. The return on investment for TBED will not be within a normal political cycle.

Dr. Kopp said we have to emphasize that we're not talking about political time. This is a plan for the future with a 10-20-year horizon and urge the type of patience and dedication that this requires. It takes a long time to transform an economy.

Cheryl said the NTTC was created by Congress in 1989, but the kind of transformation Dr. Kopp speaks of hasn't happened.

Anne said the NTTC has some significant early successes, and they can come back. She said a Benedum-funded study is looking at whether WV needs a consortium of tech-transfer centered around colleges and universities. The first phase of that study should be done in June.

Russ said Vision Shared can be a champion for this. It doesn't have to be just a university president or a governor leading the charge. We can have a lot more impact with more champions. So who needs to be on this committee? Suggestions include Paul Hardesty, Ray Lane and John Chambers.

Juliet added that using local entrepreneurs like Air Robotics could help, too.

Anne agreed and said we also should be naming and celebrating the champions of TBED. We have a lot of home-grown talent. We need to educate and celebrate to foster a culture of innovation.

Regarding the Vision Shared strategic plan, the committee discussed some action steps for the committee in addition to exploring education/advocacy opportunities. Cheryl said WJU has a new president who should be brought into the discussion. Dr. Kopp said we need tax-incentives to encourage new research-based businesses. Russ mentioned the State Chamber's research and development tax credit. Dr. Kopp mentioned the angel investor bill and also discussed ideas for improving the state's tax structure to incentivize or facilitate research-based economic development.