

Project/Initiatives Targeted for 360 Group Participation

Project	Description	Potential Roles for the 360 Group
<p>Regional Indicators Project</p>	<p>The CEDS has given us a great start in the establishment of priorities for economic development in the region. Across the range of focus areas highlighted in the document, it will be possible to measure our progress through regional metrics. There is an opportunity here for the 360 Group to take ownership of the priorities within the CEDS by generating an annual “State of the Region” report. The report would contain the presentation of each of the regional indicators and an explanation of what might account for the level of performance measured. This would be an excellent way to raise the profile of the group while providing first hand knowledge of the region’s economic health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a working group to collaborate with the SWMPC to produce an annual State of the Region Report • Report on initiatives either planned or being implemented at any given time. • Explain how local/regional initiatives will impact the regional metrics.
<p>Site Selection/Economic Gardening Database</p>	<p>This is something that has come up here and there in 360 Group discussions – i.e. the need for a tool like a database or map that contains updated information about the region’s physical assets, demographics, and market data. This could be used to quickly and cheaply provide highly relevant information to entrepreneurs and start-up/growing businesses in the region, and also to businesses exploring the option of relocating to southwest Michigan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a working group to develop a regional site selection solicitation clearinghouse. • Develop a process for sharing information about projects throughout the region. • Generate a library of best practices to assist local practitioners and governments with economic gardening.
<p>Regional Strategic Growth Plan</p>	<p>A project discussed during Julie Pioch’s speed presentation at the last meeting. The project represents a special opportunity to develop an asset based regional strategic growth plan for economic development in southwest Michigan. It would couple the considerable data analysis capabilities of the Land Policy Institute of MSU with a regionally driven process of goal setting and action strategy construction, based on the work that built the framework for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2009. In many ways, the work ahead for the strategic growth plan will be instrumental in the continued revision and augmentation of the CEDS. The 360 group survey strongly indicated that the 360 group considered the further development of the CEDS to be a priority.</p>	<p>Four phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear statement of vision for the region • A list of important regional assets • A list of parameters/regional principles to link the assets to the vision • A list of not more than ten action strategies to guide future economic development in the region
<p>Green Enterprises Incubator</p>	<p>It is an empirical fact that southwest Michigan farmers produce some of the world’s best fruits and vegetables. We are missing opportunities to add value right here in the region to products that are highly marketable. There is significant potential to better access markets outward in concentric rings beginning within our region and extending to include the entire Chicago “foodshed.” Our work on this issue has narrowed into four areas of focus: research, regional branding, processing, and distribution. The vision for this project includes a single incubator cluster wherein businesses will be incubated that can address each of the thematic areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support letters for planning or implementation grant applications • Provide in-kind or hard match for grant applications • Provide expertise in project implementation