

Item

South Central Kansas Prosperity Project Update

Background

The draft plan for the Prosperity Project will be released in the next few weeks. The Consortium Leadership Team (CLT) and the work teams will begin reviewing the draft plan in July and August. Members of REAP will also be asked to review and comment on the draft plan over the next several weeks. The final draft of the plan will be released in September 2014.

To help determine public support and interest for possible regional planning priorities, a community survey was issued by Wichita State University, Hugo Wall School, to 30,000 residents in the five county region. The survey asked citizens to prioritize specific projects and the importance of working regionally. A copy of the survey is included on the following pages.

There are consistent themes emerging from the Prosperity Project, including a call for more regional cooperation and coordination on a number of topics. Additionally, some pilot projects are being explored including the "Built" game, which is a tool for public engagement and offers participants the opportunity to have meaningful dialogue about how we live together and make choices about planning our communities. The game allows for diverse perspectives to be seen and heard, reflected upon and analyzed while still having fun in a collaborative atmosphere. It allows all participants, regardless of background, training, or expertise, to have an equal voice in the process of creating a map that expresses personal values and intersects with community values.

Another proposal being considered is the creation of a Youth Council to increase the public involvement and engagement among young people in South Central Kansas. A summary of the proposed Youth Council is included on the following pages.

Each of these items will be discussed with the Executive Committee.

Recommended Action

Take appropriate action

“Young people need stronger family and community supports. They also, however, need to be afforded the tools, training and trust to apply their creativity and energy to effect change in their own lives and in the future of their neighborhoods, communities, cities and states (NLC, 2007)”. Communities have the opportunity to contribute to youth while they in turn contribute to their own communities through civic engagement. When adults and youth work together, conditions are created so youth may experience the successful development of themselves, peers, their families and communities. The creation of a youth council establishes an environment where youth and adult community members know youth are valued members of the community.

Mission: The purpose of the REAP Youth Council is to increase the civic involvement/engagement among youth in South Central Kansas and to provide an opportunity for all youth to have input on the shaping of their communities.

Objectives:

- Build youth capacity through leadership skill development.
- Create an opportunity for youth to interact with diverse populations.
- Establish an avenue for youth to interact with policy makers.
- Inform youth of the public policy and planning processes.
- Utilize social media to connect council fellows, enhance communication, and capitalize on the creativity of youth.
- Connect the concerns and interests of youth with the objectives and policies of REAP.
- Create a sustainable REAP youth working group which publicly displays REAP’s ongoing commitment to serve area youth and involve them in shaping communities.
- Solidify opportunities for peer to peer and community leader mentoring.

Membership & Eligibility

The 45 members of the inaugural REAP Youth Council will be entering their junior year of high school and reside in the five counties served by REAP. Each youth is formally recommended by multiple adult community leaders for their inclusion. Once the inaugural year has passed, an executive board made up of high school seniors will mentor the first year members and assist in the workings of the council. The work by the second year members validates the council as a true youth organization.

Action

The members of the entire REAP Youth Council will meet four times during the year. Peer to peer and mentoring activities, along with special events may lead to additional interactions throughout the year.