

Date: September 19, 2017
To: CRCOG Policy Board Members
From: Lyle Wray, Executive Director, CRCOG
Subject: **Regional Futures Initiative Update**

At its August meeting, the Executive Committee agreed that CRCOG would carry out a listening tour with key community leaders on a proposed Regional Futures Initiative (RFI) and bring the results of these conversations back for further consideration at a planning retreat after the November 2017 elections. In preparation for launching this tour in late September, we have: generated a sizable list of government, business, non-profit, education and philanthropic leaders to interview; crafted a questionnaire to guide our discussions; and started to assemble an interview team and a fall meeting schedule. A copy of the questionnaire and an accompanying cover memo to interviewees is attached.

I have also included a copy of our August 2nd memo to the Executive Committee, which highlighted the work that gave rise to the RFI concept and prescribed a series of recommended next steps for CRCOG to undertake in the months ahead. Note that many of these planned activities—doing a clear-eyed situational analysis, formulating a limited set of ‘game changer’ initiatives and building capacity through strategic organizational collaborations—will also be foundational elements of our regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) update. Accordingly, staff is already collaborating to ensure coordination across these two major projects, as well as with future Metro Hartford Progress Points’ activities.

Please let me know if you have an interest in helping with the upcoming listening tour or if you have any questions related to the RFI in general.

To: Listening Tour Participants
From: Stewart “Chip” Beckett, CRCOG Policy Board Chair and
Lyle D. Wray, Executive Director, CRCOG
Date: September 13, 2017
Subject: Background and Questions for Regional Futures Initiative Conversations

On August 9, 2017, the Capitol Region Council of Governments Executive Committee agreed that CRCOG would carry out a listening tour with key community leaders on a proposed Regional Futures Initiative and bring the results of these conversations back for further consideration at a planning retreat after the November 2017 elections.

The ‘listening tour’ this fall will involve reaching out to key community leaders with the purpose of:

- Gauging interest in the proposed Regional Futures Initiative concept
- Identifying specific potential supporters and resources
- Identifying perceived obstacles to such an effort
- Outlining the ways interviewees and their organizations might be able to advance related work
- Securing introductions to additional community leaders to contact, interview and/or engage in future activities

After looking at a number of prior metropolitan-based strategic planning efforts in this and other regions, as well as carrying out a number of events related to new approaches to economic development, the proposed goal for a regional futures process is to **accelerate inclusive and equitable economic growth in the metropolitan region**. This would involve raising income growth across the income distribution with particular attention to opportunities for engaging those who have often been left behind.

To move forward and act on this goal, three steps were recommended: **conduct a situational analysis** of the metropolitan region and state, **identify a limited number of promising ‘Game Changer’ initiatives**, and **build the organizational capacity** to sustain action over a significant period of time.

In support of these proposed steps, we have prepared a preliminary list of related questions to ask listening tour participants (see below). In addition, we have pulled together a Regional Futures Initiative Resource Guide (attached) to provide some additional context to the regional futures conversation. While some of the materials describe recent work in this arena—both here and across the country--others were included as a reminder that this is not a new discussion—just a renewed opportunity to make some much-needed progress.

Thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in our listening tour. We look forward to meeting with you. Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact Lyle Wray at 860-522-2217, ext. 4232 or at lwrap@crcog.org.

Regional Futures Questionnaire

Question 1: Goal-Setting

Recommendation: **Accelerate inclusive and equitable economic growth in the metropolitan region.** This would involve raising income growth across the income distribution with particular attention to opportunities for engaging those who have often been left behind

- a. **What do you think of ‘accelerating inclusive and equitable economic growth in the metropolitan region’ as a core, overarching goal for the region to address in the coming years?**
- b. **Does this make sense to you?**
- c. **Other suggestions?**

Question 2: Situational Analysis

Recommendation: Do a high quality, clear-eyed assessment of our situation as a metropolitan region and state. Reflect on who we are, what we have, where we are and which opportunities particularly suit us as a metropolitan region. This is essentially a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis with an emphasis on our metropolitan region’s context and relevant opportunities.

- a. **Do you have sources or individuals that we might look to in carrying out a situational analysis?**
- b. **Sample documents?**
- c. **National or international contacts to suggest?**

Question 3: Strategic Initiatives

Recommendation: Formulate a limited number of “game changer” strategies that will move the trajectory of inclusive economic growth in the right direction. These would focus on drivers to accelerate inclusive economic development.

- a. **Do you have suggestions on how we might go about selecting a small number of “game changer” initiatives for the metropolitan region to accelerate inclusive economic growth?**
- b. **Do you have examples to share from other regions?**
- c. **Resources to suggest in advancing this step?**

Question 4: Build Sustained Organizational Capacity

Recommendation: Put in place a sustainable organizational capacity to lead the process of situational analysis, get strategic initiatives launched and provide ongoing support to the initiative to assure that actions are carried out over a sustained period of time.

This would involve identifying organizational collaborations, partners and a longstanding “backbone” organization to move on the strategic initiatives and ensure the success of the initiative long-term.

- a. Do you have suggestions about how we might go about building an organization, a “steering committee”, that will see to it that the needed actions are carried out?**
- b. Do you have names to suggest for the steering committee?**
- c. Which partners would you suggest be part of any collaboration in this effort?**
- d. Do you have specific suggestions about individuals and organizations at the metropolitan regional level that should be called on to help implement the goal of accelerating inclusive economic growth for the region?**
- e. Do you have any general observations or suggestions on this effort to share and other lead individuals or organizations that we should be pursuing?**
- f. As we work to build a diverse guiding body that includes representation from key sectors (business, government, non-profit, education, philanthropy, media, etc.), are there key individuals who come to mind that are extremely well connected and would be invaluable towards forging new connections?**
- g. Are there specific ways you envision/are interested in helping to advance this work (i.e. serving on a steering committee, providing introductions, setting up meetings with other key community leaders, committing organizational staff and other resources, etc.)?**

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 2, 2017
To: CRCOG Executive Committee Members
From: Chip Beckett, CRCOG Policy Board Chair and
Lyle Wray, Executive Director, CRCOG
Subject: **Regional Futures Initiative**

At the CRCOG Foundation's Annual Meeting on June 23, 2017 the CRCOG Foundation Board of Directors and several invited guests participated in a discussion regarding whether CRCOG and the CRCOG Foundation should proceed with a **Regional Futures Initiative** for the metropolitan region and whether CRCOG or the CRCOG Foundation might serve as a "backbone organization" to assure that the effort moves forward over time.

What follows is a summary of activities that led up to that discussion and an initial proposal for related work over the coming year for the CRCOG Executive Committee to consider at its August 9, 2017 meeting next week.

How We Got Here:

The CRCOG Foundation Board's recent conversation was an outgrowth of CRCOG's expanding involvement in regional economic development activities. Recent efforts include:

- Progress Points meetings. Numerous meetings with the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and its Progress Points Partners to determine if there is an appetite for moving from an informing role to a more impactful one and to identify 'what we can do differently' in order to bring true prosperity to the region.
- Convening by the CRCOG Chair of an ad hoc economic development working group.
- CRCOG's independent work to engage key stakeholders and to articulate strategies for a better 'way forward' for Connecticut and our region.
- Three **Next Generation Economic Development** workshops focusing on talent development and advanced manufacturing, innovation and entrepreneurship and anchor institutions, as well as a standalone German American Business Forum on Industry 4.0. A fall session focusing on millennials is planned.
- Very recent receipt of a US EDA grant to develop a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) for our 38 town region.

Moving forward, the CEDs provides an opportunity for strategic decision-making that will provide a roadmap to accelerate inclusive economic growth within the metropolitan region.

Recommended Next Steps

Given the recommendations that came out of the Metro Hartford Progress Points working group sessions, discussions at the CRCOG Foundation meeting, and a variety of events

that should inspire collective action in Connecticut (e.g. Hartford's potential bankruptcy, the State's unresolved budget crisis, the exodus of major corporations, etc.), we recommend CRCOG consider taking a leadership role over the next year to coordinate the following activities:

- **Goal-Setting:** Build consensus around the need for accelerating inclusive/equitable economic growth (i.e., raising incomes across the income distribution with particular attention to opportunities for engaging those who have often been left behind). Such efforts may focus in part on helping individuals secure an initial job as well as promotions.
- **Situational Analysis:** Do a clear-eyed assessment of our situation: who, what, where to identify opportunities that particularly suit us as a metropolitan region (i.e., SWOT analysis with an emphasis on context and opportunities).
- **Strategic Initiatives:** Formulate a limited number of "game changer" strategies that will move the trajectory of inclusive economic growth in the right direction.
- **Capacity-Building:** Identify organizational collaborations that we will need to get action on the strategic initiatives and sustain this implementation over a sustained period of time.

Listening Tour. As a first step, we recommend launching a 'listening tour' this fall reaching out to key community leaders. We would use these conversations to: promote the regional futures initiative concept, gauge interest as well as perceived obstacles, identify specific opportunities for engagement and how they can advance the effort, and secure introductions to other influential players.

A preliminary list of individuals and organizations to connect with is attached. We welcome your suggestions for additions and hope that Policy Board members would participate in these conversations particularly when they have strong ties to the identified parties.

Planning Retreat. We also recommend scheduling a planning retreat for Policy Board members after the November elections. This would include an orientation on the regional futures concept to encourage participation and to create excitement around being part of such a process.

Steering Committee. Should CRCOG decide to move forward with the recommended course of action, we will ask Board members to serve on a steering committee to provide direction to the project and to help staff connect with and potentially recruit corporate, business, non-profit and philanthropic leaders from their communities. We would plan to ask each town to identify and provide contact information for three key leaders. Since several regional entities have already expressed preliminary interest in moving forward with a shared regional agenda and providing some staff support to this effort, they will be invited to participate as well.

Collectively, these initial activities will be critical for assessing if the necessary political and financial will exist here to support a successful, long-term initiative with a 20 plus year time horizon, championed by a core, diverse group of committed partners. They will also provide an opportunity for data collection in advance of the next legislative session in February.

In preparation for next week's CRCOG Executive Committee meeting, we have assembled background materials that can be accessed on the CRCOG website to provide some additional context to the regional futures conversation. While some describe recent work in this arena, we have also included materials like the Executive Summary for the Metro Hartford Millennium Project, to remind us that this is not a new conversation—just a renewed opportunity to make much-needed progress.

We look forward to your views on this important potential initiative. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to call to discuss in advance.