

Berea City Local Economic Development
Big Business Working Group
One-Page Strategic Plan

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With the understanding that “big business” including the Berea industrial park provides substantial support to the local economic base and that “big business” is more than just manufacturing we have set forth to discover more about the following as a small working group.

Goal 1: Our goal would be to create a workforce development program or training consortium that supports the training and preparedness of the local workforce to compete and find gainful employment in a variety of sectors in the area along with obtaining viable and basic life skill training.

Vision: This strategy will not necessarily start any new businesses but will rather amplify and strengthen the workforce prepared for employment in various existing sectors or businesses. The program will act to prepare residents and potential employees with both life and work related skill sets. A recurrent theme in conversations with industry representatives is that the workforce is not prepared with technical skills or with basic life skills (passing a drug test or having a GED, not to mention specialized technical skills). This program should act to plug the leakage in workforce preparedness and build a social capital pool. The training program would and should be more expansive than trade skills and include things like maintenance, purchasing, business marketing, production planning, other tech related fields along with the traditional vocations like welding, electric and plumbing to name a few. The proposed program is congruent with the Berea SWOT analysis; (1) supporting the strengths-large manufacturing base and strong public education (2) addressing weakness-youth out migration, non-local manufacturing, workforce skills (3) capitalizing on opportunities-vocational education, thriving industrial park, community partners, Berea College and other regional institutions while (4) minimizing the threats-loss of human capital, overemphasis on corporate attraction and absence of a community center.

Obstacles: The major obstacles of the program are related to fiscal, political and educational capacities. The program is envisioned as a consortium or partnership between the City of Berea, local industry, and regional institutions (EKU, UK and our high schools) so getting all these parties to the table will be the first challenge. The fiscal challenges will be deeper as local, state, and institutional budgets are cut over the next two years to make up for recent shortfalls. It may require a concerted effort on the part of the City of Berea to bring the potential supportive partners together while also addressing the any entities who may oppose the program.

Action Plan: (a) City of Berea facilitates creation of workforce development partnership with industry and institutional representatives. (b) Identify free training curriculum provided by state or other institutions that could be provided with a minimal fiscal investment (4H, entrepreneurship, youth leadership). (c) Target industry specific needs in terms of core competencies and desired life skills in available workforce. (d) Facilitate K-12 involvement through youth programming or co-op programs like the micro-communities example. (e) Create an awareness campaign for both workforce and industry partners. (f) Create or adapt a physical space(s) to accommodate the different sorts of trainings needed. (g) Incentive programs for both worker completion and for the programmatic supports by industry

partners. This could potentially be a revenue generating meta-business if the consortium is able to charge a fee for services or trainings, this is a slight opportunity given that most of the initial training materials would be free of charge but in the future there is the possibility that fee could be charged for specialized or technical training programs where appropriate.

Public Policy: City officials will need to support the creation of the program consortium, which includes local institutions and industry. Berea College should be at the table because of their interest in creating a cradle to career program and their involvement in preparedness programs like Gear Up and their recent Project Neighborhood funding. The major policy obstacles are related to clear partnerships among diverse constituents who do not always have the best working relationships.

Goal 2: Stimulate and promote economic activity related to the depot: The Depot will be demanding highly skilled labor as it embarks to create a facility to dispose of its stored munitions. This will be a large pool of very skilled labor and our goal would be to find the intersection of these workers and future opportunity here in the Berea community, which also includes the potential adaptive reuse of the depot site in the future.

We have not developed this idea much further

Currently we have identified the skill sets that will be needed and to identify the economic impact in terms of infrastructure and social capital. The questions for the future is related to how can the site are attractive to business once the Depot has de-militarized.

Goal 3: B2B Procurement; our goal would be to explore the possibility of supporting “big business” in finding local agents of procurement. This would allow specific businesses to identify local suppliers of inputs to their business while also facilitating the procurement of business inputs and professional services to/from big business to/from small business or to/from governmental entities.

*This strategy has not had the support in committee to continue, it appears from much conversation that B2B procurement is already taking place between the local industries. The city of Berea has had many spin off business develop due to work that need to be done off site. Most of our machine shops have been spin off from a manufacturing facility that need a specific product produced and these spinoffs were able to supply the needed material or product. These spin offs have provide countless jobs that have proved the City of Berea with additional tax base.