



Semi-Annual Report July 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009

The Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District, with the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments as the administering agency, is charged with providing the research, planning, leadership, local capacity building and advisory services to our local communities for the purpose of decreasing dependence on timber and other natural resource industries and increasing sustainable, family wage jobs in business and industry sectors that avoid long term economic down turns and cycles. A report of progress towards the completion of work elements is outlined below.

1. Analyze and communicate around the region the characteristics, trends and resources of regional and community economies through elements of the Community Economic Development Strategy, at general and special meetings, and in newsletters and publications of the Council of Governments and the Cowlitz and Lewis Economic Development Councils.

The CLEDD, in January, launched a semi-annual newsletter, reporting on grant opportunities, market analysis and forecasting and meeting information. This newsletter was made available on the CLEDD website, which has been revamped and will be re-launched in January 2010. The CLEDD board met in September to discuss opportunities to revitalize the district, including the completion and adoption of by-laws. The CLEDD board will be working in 2010 to broaden the membership base of the CLEDD. The CLEDD also purchased the Pacific Northwest Futures Game as a tool to assist regional partners in exercising long-term planning and decision-making opportunities. The Futures Game, introduced at the Washington State Department of Commerce's Community Survivors meeting and developed by the University of Idaho and Innovative Leadership, has provided several partners with the opportunity to play the game in the region. The CLEDD is also looking at how the game may be of assistance for other partners, including schools, local committees and commissions.

2. Perform an annual review of the Cowlitz-Lewis Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), including the database and regional economic indicators to create the most accurate, timely profile of the region and the strategies needed to address its economic improvement. Amendments will be made via the annual report to be prepared near fiscal year's end.

The CEDS report, updated in early 2009, will be reviewed in 2010 for project updates. The regional economic indicators, provided in the market analysis in a semi-annual newsletter, are updated monthly for each county and the district.

3. Finalize, adopt and implement EDD bylaws and make adjustments to the EDD Board and Committees.

The CLEDD Board finalized and adopted the bylaws in September. The bylaws were signed and sent to EDA in November.

4. Respond to changes in the regional, state, national and international economies by collaborating and coordinating with local, state, federal and non-profit agencies and individuals to derive, enhance and implement effective economic development strategies.

Staff assisted local jurisdictions with researching funding opportunities with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Several projects by local jurisdictions are benefiting through this collaboration. In November, the cities of Castle Rock, Woodland, Kalama, Kelso and Cowlitz County collaborated on an application for an Energy Efficient Block Grant. We were successful, receiving \$650,000 for transportation related projects, ranging from sidewalks and trails to new energy efficient street lamps.

Additionally, the City of Longview and the Port and city of Woodland applied for Economic Development Administration grants in 2009. The City of Longview received \$1.4 million in grant funding to complete Weber Avenue to the Mint Farm Industrial Park.

Finally, the CWCOG applied for and received a grant from the EDA for the Business Disaster Resiliency project to assist business owners for disaster planning and preparedness. The project is in collaboration with the economic development councils and the chambers of commerce. The CLEDD Disaster Resiliency Committee, designated to review and hire a consulting firm to assist with the identification and mitigation of disasters, completed their work in November and hired Pearce Global to complete the first phase of the project, this should be completed by July 2010.

5. Enhance data gathering, analysis and decision making by exploring several new initiatives derived during the CEDS updating process. These are:
 - a. Update the index of Regional Economic Indicators to assist local businesses in decision making and assist public leaders in developing appropriate responses to changing conditions.
 - b. Develop regional economic multipliers to evaluate economic impact and cost/benefit analysis of local projects.
 - c. Examine various cluster analysis approaches to assist in expanding sectors that complement the current array of existing local businesses and industries.

The regional indicators are updated monthly and quarterly and distributed to economic development councils and other interested partners. The CLEDD also provides to the regional partners economic news, including but not limited to regional forecasts from the Washington State's Employment Department, Washington State Office of Financial Management, and other pertinent indicators.

6. Improve economic opportunities in areas of the EDD region that are lagging behind regional

and state growth activity, especially the smaller cities and timber and resource impacted communities in the region.

The CLEDD continues to support efforts by the economic development councils, local jurisdictions and chambers to improve the economic climate that have plagued the region over the last year. In 2009, the economic recession reached a climactic rate of unemployment and those receiving unemployment insurance. Natural resource-based industries were hit twice with a presidential declared disaster of snow and flooding in 2008-2009 and the housing slump. The region received additional blows to the closure of Cameron Glass located at the Port of Kalama in the fall 2009, which laid off approximately 100 employees. Other manufacturing companies have also had substantial layoffs and declined productivity.

7. Improve public infrastructure development and conditions in support of economic development in local communities.

As stated earlier, in a collaborative effort in Cowlitz County, five jurisdictions received transportation energy efficiency funding for sidewalks and streetlights. Yet, with the lack of funding for infrastructure projects, especially with the cut in funding to the Washington State Public Works Trust Fund, jurisdictions throughout the region are looking for non-traditional opportunities to fund infrastructure projects. The CLEDD continues to research funding opportunities and informing regional partners of grants and loans.

8. Improve opportunities for minority, female, the unemployed and others in economic development planning and strategy development activities.

The CLEDD continues to assist in the involvement of minorities, females, the unemployed and others through workforce and educational opportunities as well as employment.

9. Assist existing businesses so as to maintain and enhance their operating viability, especially forecasting resiliency to floods and other disasters.

As described earlier, the CLEDD received funding for phase one of the Business Disaster Resiliency project. The CLEDD hired a consulting firm in November, which will complete work in July 2010. The second phase of the project will continue the results from phase one, with direct assistance to business owners via the and other meetings throughout 2010 and into 2011. The goal of the project is to provide numerous tools and opportunities for businesses to protect their business from potential disasters, and assure continued operations following disasters.

The Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority, along with the U.S. Corps of Engineers, continues efforts to mitigate flooding in Lewis, Grays Harbor and Thurston counties.

10. Participate on local and regional transportation planning committees to promote improvements to area transportation facilities and systems.

Cowlitz and Lewis counties, as members of the Southwest Washington Transportation Regional Planning Organization, pursue transportation improvement strategies at the local, region and state levels. The CWCOC is the lead agency for that organization as well, insuring greater coordination and collaboration on transportation and economic development planning and project improvements.

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