



Serving Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle Counties

**Minutes of meeting of
Community and Economic Development (CED) Advisory Subcommittee for Unit 2
March 23, 2023, at 12:00 pm – Virtual format**

Agenda

1. Call to Order, Roll Call
2. Review and approval of minutes from Aug. 2, 2022, meeting
3. Open Meetings Act training status
4. Review and discussion of draft Unit 2 Community Needs Questionnaire
5. Proposed Date for Next Meeting: Thursday, June 22, 2023, 5:30 pm (??), via Zoom
6. Adjourn

Present: Gina Caronna, Heather Wick, Mike Delany.

Absent: Emily Plapp, Liz Vos, Lisa Hinrichs, Sherrie Taylor.

1. Meeting called to order shortly after noon, CST.

2. The first order of business was to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting on Aug. 2, 2022, but, as no quorum existed, an approval vote was not in order.

3. As all present are in compliance with OMA training requirements, no discussion was needed.

4. M. Delany opened with a discussion of the CED needs assessment questionnaire and potential amendments.

H. Wick asked whether people look to UIUC for Social/Emotional Wellbeing. Delany offered that this questionnaire is oriented primarily toward CED themes. Other teams are putting out their own questionnaires. However, since there's no FCS educator currently in the Unit, perhaps this could be reflected in the questions.

Wick also suggested adding a reference to clean energy/hydrogen/sustainability. This will be a big theme.

G. Caronna asked about the purpose of this survey. Delany explains that our programming is tied to needs of counties we serve. This is designed to help discover the current state of these needs.

Caronna noted she is seeing duplication of efforts across organizations and agencies. There should be other places that already have this information. Wick noted this is true, up to a point. There is stuff that Growth Dimensions (GD) doesn't focus on, like food insecurity, but some of it is. GD has the conversations with businesses, rather than residents.



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Delany noted that we talk to as many stakeholders we can, but that the populace is pretty “surveyed out.” Caronna asked if Extension is trying to get at something that IMEC or R1 isn’t doing? Delany responded affirmatively, if there is a need for educational programming, at the intersection point of regional needs and Extension capacity. Looking to find best area for deployment of CED skills. Often, the best target is facilitation of community conversation and engagement.

Caronna noted orienting efforts to find a way that the organization can provide training that businesses need. Have you heard of Community of the Future (from ComEd)? Meeting for over a year, trying to do the same thing. ComEd has been funding activities in communities. Work is loosely in the sustainable-communities area. She also suggested looking for opportunities where Extension could take state’s curriculum and applying it in a way that other orgs can’t.

Caronna also noted that, in relation to food-insecurity- and other social-service issues, Workforce Conn has an “MOU Group” of service providers (anybody who receives federal workforce funding) addressing training for people to be productive citizens (access to daycare, transportation, food, etc). This group could offer answers to problems or questions. Courtney Geiger is the facilitator. This could be a one-stop shop for Extension in identifying these types of needs. These folks are generally good information resources. Other WIOA boards have similar structure.

As example of how needs assessments can dovetail with what Extension does, Delany notes a recent referral of a local inquiry about the ag workforce to not only the Workforce Connection but also to a faculty member at UIUC.

Caronna notes that, re: entrepreneurship, RVC doesn’t really have much in the way of entrepreneurship classes, but Sheila Hill has ThinkBig ramping up. Wick notes that Rockford University has some available.

Caronna observes that we’re really looking for a way for Extension to fit in. Wick notes that, as we at Extension are doing needs assessment, we’re looking to partner in areas where programming is needed. This will link networks.

Delany asks that, if Wick or Caronna have sources of information other than this survey, it would be great if they were shareable. Caronna offers that she can generate a report out of Lightcast (EMSI) if we need something. They might be lagging by six months or so, but still worthwhile on workforce-related data. They have all sorts of interesting data. RACVB is also doing some work; They are showing by career category how much money someone can make. It would be interesting to talk to young kids about wages and the corresponding cost of living of their communities. The data can also identify how many people are working in a particular job in our region, and factor in cost-of-living. This could be added to the My Hometown Is Cool discussion.

Delany then offered a description of the Unit’s Real World program on May 6. Caronna noted that these can be such influential events. She offered to help with such events. For panel participants, she opined they might need younger people than her on these panels.

On a related note, Delany mentioned Aaron Lewis at Boone County office as a potential workforce partner for GD.



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Delany expressed his appreciation for the work the council has done on the needs assessment. Explained Heather Coyle's vision for the council. Wick noted that, with her extensive background with Extension, she is very tied into the history of the current structure of BDO.

Delany solicited help with getting the questionnaire refined and circulated. We don't need 1000 responses, but we need someone willing to fill out the questionnaire. He noted his concern that it might be off-putting in its length. Wick said it looks more daunting in printed form, rather than online. It is a pretty short survey and should not be too overwhelming.

5. Caronna had to leave the meeting at about the 55-minute point. She said that, for future meetings, a 5:30 pm afternoon in the afternoon would also work; Wick concurred.

Wick and Delany continued addressing a few topics. Delany asked what Wick thinks of Aaron Lewis as addition to the Advisory Council? Wick responded that she has not met him yet, but hears good things about him and thinks that Becky Tobin will be a big proponent of it, and she will like to have a staff member involved in economic development.

Finally, Delany gave Wick an overview of the Hometown Leaders program being developed, noted that it might be interesting to see how GD might fit into the picture.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 1:18 pm.

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact the meeting coordinator. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.