

Report on the Carter County Tomorrow Strategic Planning Sessions

The Carter County Tomorrow (CCT) Board of Directors met on five different occasions to conduct strategic planning, take a full assessment of the organization, draft a mission statement, and develop a set of goals to guide the organization's efforts over the next few years. These sessions extended from August to December of 2014 and were facilitated by Pat Hardy (with The University of Tennessee's Municipal Technical Advisory Service).

Analysis of the CCT Organization

During the first session the following questions and responses were identified and discussed:

1. Responses to the question, "What are people saying about us?"
 - a. What does CCT do?/What is its purpose?
 - b. CCT isn't doing anything.
 - c. CCT is a waste of money.
 - d. CCT is not producing jobs/where are the businesses?/No industry/etc.
 - e. What is CCT?
 - f. Isn't Tom the industrial recruiter?
 - g. How many people work for CCT?
 - h. Among the things that are publicized - CCT is doing a good job.

2. Responses to the question, "What is working at CCT?"
 - a. Success with grants.
 - b. The efforts of many agencies are coordinated and more efficient.
 - c. CCT is building strong relationships with State officials.
 - d. We have a good Board of Directors.
 - e. CCT is responsive to inquiries about development.
 - f. CCT can speak as a centralized voice and act as a "one stop shop."
 - g. CCT serves as the "middle man" on many projects.
 - h. CCT has moved forward on many goals.
 - i. The CCT team is a good, collaborative group.
 - j. The CEO has vision and knowledge.
 - k. The CCT Board and CEO provide community leadership in many different ways.

3. Responses to the question, "What is not working?"
 - a. We don't showcase or promote what we do/lack of PR.
 - b. The CCT organizational structure is confusing.
 - c. We have challenges/lack of support among some members of the Board.
 - d. Our name does not reflect what we do.
 - e. We have not identified/agreed on our core mission.
 - f. We do not have a good short and long-term strategic plan.

- g. Sometimes the CCT Board is not vocal enough or engaged in actual delivery of the mission.
- h. We have challenges with external support/understanding of what we do/negative opinions.
- i. The CCT website is poor.
- j. CCT does too much and is sometimes stretched too thin.
- k. We do not have enough capacity (staff) to accomplish all we do.
- l. We have not prioritized our activities.
- m. CCT is in need of volunteers.
- n. CCT does not have enough political support.

Identification of CCT Responsibilities

The board identified broad categories CCT is currently responsible for. They are:

- 1. Business recruitment/retention/development.
- 2. Community development.
- 3. Tourism.
- 4. Chamber of Commerce management.
- 5. Facilities maintenance.
- 6. Administration.

They also identified areas they believe CCT should possibly be responsible for. They are:

- 1. Facilitation of development.
- 2. Partnering for positive change.
- 3. Tourism development.
- 4. Improvements in our quality of life.
- 5. Recruiting, maintaining, and growing the economy.
- 6. Creating an atmosphere for development.
- 7. Creating economic activity.
- 8. Workforce development/human capital.

Development of the CCT Mission Statement

To begin this process, the following mission “content items” were identified:

CCT Rules of conduct:

- Equal treatment of everyone.
- Respect.
- Transparency.

- Dependability (do what you say you will do).
- Listening.
- Communication.
- Work for the common good.
- Teamwork.

The ultimate result of CCT's work:

- Making our area a great place to live, work, and recreate.
- Improved quality of life related to livability.
- Establish and sustain a competitive advantage for business and commerce.

Values of CCT:

- Servant heart.
- Trustworthy.
- Professionalism.
- Fairness.
- Ethical.
- Appreciation of community.
- Pride in community.
- Being organized.
- Efficiency.

Customers/Clients

- Businesses.
- The workforce.
- Local governments.
- Developers.

These characteristics were used to develop a draft mission statement, the purpose of which is to articulate CCT's ultimate purpose. The draft statement approved by the Board is as follows:

Carter County Tomorrow is a unique agency created by local governments and community leaders to help:

- *recruit, maintain and grow business,*
- *facilitate economic activity,*
- *provide a means for meaningful discussion and action shaping our community's economic future,*
- *serve as a voice to achieve these from both a local and regional perspective.*

We will do this while protecting our heritage and natural resources, and improving the lives of those who live, work, visit, and invest here.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives were established to guide CCT's efforts over the next few years. These are presented in no particular order:

A. External development-related goals:

1. Locate marketable/developable land we can control.
 - a. Identify infrastructure needs and exposure.
 - b. Identify financial/funding sources.
Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: CCT/ECD
Time frame for completion: 1/17
2. Complete the planning phase of the riverfront development.
 - a. Complete the Master Plan.
 - b. Implement the Master Plan.
Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: City of Elizabethton Planning Dept.
Time frame for completion: 1/16
3. Utilize new development tools.
 - a. Identify the "tools" in our tourism toolbox.
 - i. Identify new tools available to us.
 - ii. Have a visual presence at regional events.
 - iii. Host a "race & competitive events" program.
 - iv. Identify partner organizations and events.
 - b. Identify industries we can pull from and partner with.
 - i. Complete economic analysis to determine existing industries/trades.
Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: CCT Board
Time frame for completion: 1/17 and on-going

B. Internal operations goals:

1. Develop a set of CCT outcome measures.
 - a. Develop an economic activity report ("scorecard").
 - i. Provide monthly report and disseminate to stakeholders for informed, strategic decisions.
Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: CCT Director
Time frame for completion: 2/17 CCT workshop.
2. Improve our public relations efforts.
 - a. Better communicate our goals and achievements.
 - i. Produce a unified monthly (e-news) partnership report.
 - ii. Consider re-branding of the CCT partnership.
 1. Potential new names include:
 - a. Economic Alliance of Carter County and Elizabethton.
 - b. Elizabethton and Carter County Economic Alliance.

- iii. Develop a meeting/communication plan for 2015.
 - iv. Identify key constituencies and calendar for presentations (e.g. Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, City Council, County Commission, etc.).
 - v. Tell our story and tell it often!
 - b. Articulate the “investment” part of what CCT does – communicate the long-term vision.
 Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: Tom Anderson and the CCT Board.
 Time frame for completion: 1/15 and on-going.
- 3. Strengthen our structure.
 - a. Re-align advisory board roles and day-to-day Director duties.
 - i. Coordinate with the re-branding process so the new structure and revised roles are communicated to key stakeholders.
 - ii. Push out a memo of understanding to the CCT Board, advisory board, and staff so that revised or articulated roles are clearly described.
 - 1. Revise the CCT By-Laws to reflect this.
 - b. Develop a CEO job description, performance standards and an annual evaluation process.
 - i. Incorporate the “scorecard” into the evaluation process.
 - c. Develop a more engaged Board of Directors.
 - d. Strengthen the position of Board Chair.
 - i. Encourage more visibility from the Board Chair.
 Person(s) responsible for coordination of this goal: Board Chair Richard Tester, CCT Director Tom Anderson, and the CCT Board.
 Time frame for completion: 1/15.

C. External Miscellaneous goals:

- 1. Consider facilitating a community-based strategic planning process.
- 2. Improve our focus on workforce/employee development.
 - a. Identify specific workforce skillsets and recruit/market to those.
- 3. Improve regional cooperation.