

RMC/RMF Joint Planning and Development Committee Meeting  
Wednesday, May 13, 2015  
Via Conference Call  
Minutes

Participants: Mike Thielke, Scott Warner, Doris Mason, Kathy Vernacchio, Charlotte Davis

The meeting convened at approximately 2:05 pm.

Mike Thielke welcomed everyone to the call. The purpose of the call is to come to a consensus on how the Joint Planning and Development Committee should proceed. The work of the Committee seems to be evolving from strategic planning to implementation. He would like to create a proposal for consideration by the RMC Executive Committee and the RMF Board of Trustees.

The priority areas previously identified by the Planning and Development Committee were:

1. Energy
2. Agriculture
3. Broadband
4. Youth
5. Workforce and Economic Development
6. Health

There was a feeling these are too many issues to try to work on given the staffing and capacity of the RMC. There was a suggestion to reclassify these as “areas of emphasis” vice “priority issues.” We would like to encourage and direct FY16 MAERDAF applications to address one of these six areas. This way we would have tangible outcomes to report to the General Assembly, and the RMC can advocate in terms of effectiveness on rural issues.

In addition, the Committee would suggest to the RMC and the Foundation three areas of priority to focus on for the year. Every year the three areas of priority could change. Given the projects we have already discussed, there was a suggestion for these priorities:

1. Wealth Transfer Study
2. Youth Engagement
3. Entrepreneurship

Charlotte Davis and Mike Thielke had a conference call with the facilitator of the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers. The facilitator coordinates activities with all the local community foundations. As our older, rural residents pass away; their wealth is being transferred into urban and suburban areas where their next of kin reside. A wealth transfer study would confirm this and identify where this is happening the most. We would then work with local community foundations and wealth management professionals to develop strategies to keep a portion of that wealth in rural communities. We have an invitation to continue this conversation, and there is an indication that the local community foundations might be willing to contribute to the success of this study. We should identify which organization, the RMC or the RMF, and members would be best suited to lead and work on this project.

The second priority might be the continuation of the youth engagement initiative since we have had success with the pilot program on the Upper Shore and have created interest and enthusiasm in this area. Southern Maryland is interested in replicating this project and Charlotte was asked to speak to a group Western Maryland. We have made an investment and we should maximize and leverage that investment.

The last priority would be start-ups and entrepreneurship. The RMC is already supporting entrepreneurship through its support of the Eastern Shore Business Competition and the Rural Entrepreneurship Awards through InvestMaryland. There is more the RMC can be doing in the area of rural entrepreneurship. RMC could become more involved with the Maryland Business Incubation Association out in Western Maryland. A member of that organization has expressed an interest in collaborating with the RMC in the area of entrepreneurship.

These three areas leverage each other in the sense that entrepreneurship creates wealth and those who would be most likely to be entrepreneurs would be our youth. One of the themes that kept recurring in the youth study discussions was the need to support our youth to develop business opportunities by encouraging and supporting them to be entrepreneurs.

There was some discussion regarding this proposal. Initially it was questioned whether all of the proposed priorities really pertained to the RMC, i.e. Transfer of Wealth. This led the discussion to a suggestion that perhaps there be one to three priorities proposed for each organization, RMC separate from those of the Foundation. An example would be Youth Engagement and Entrepreneurship as priorities for RMC and Transfer of Wealth a priority for the Foundation.

A suggestion was made to replace Entrepreneurship with Broadband as a more critical RMC priority.

Moving forward we should:

1. Develop action steps to move these three areas of priority forward. As we get in the middle of 2016, we could determine whether or not we want to change those areas of priority.
2. Work to get a proposal together to submit to the RMC and RMF leadership prior to the start of the fiscal year July 1. The proposal would indicate which of the priorities proposed would be championed by the RMC and which would be championed by the Foundation.

Next meeting: May 26, 2015 at 10:00 am at MDA offices in Annapolis