

Community Listening Session on Economic Development: New Castle County

New Castle County Chamber of Commerce

920 Justison Street, Wilmington, DE 19801

October 25, 2017

5:30 P.M. – 8:00 P.M.

5:30 PM: Information Session

Participants signed in. Participants were able to walk around the venue and review each station to familiarize themselves with scenarios prepared to spur discussion about the Division of Small Business, Development and Tourism's future. Staff from the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA) was on hand to answer questions and provide clarification.

6:00 PM: Overview of Delaware's Small Business Landscape & Introduction of Scenarios for the Division's Future

IPA Policy Scientist Troy Mix delivered a presentation outlining the small business landscape in Delaware. He reviewed five findings on Delaware's Small Business Landscape:

1. Large companies with more than 5,000 employees account for a higher than average share of Delaware-based employment.
2. There is significant regional variation in the share of employment with fewer than 50 employees.
3. Minority-owned businesses account for below average share of Delaware's employees and receipts.
4. Women-owned businesses account for below average share of Delaware's employee's and receipts.
5. There is no obvious lack of providers and programs, with an estimated 73 service providers offering 275 programs supportive of small business development.

Mr. Mix provided an overview of each of the three scenarios that would be discussed for the remainder of the evening: (1) Connecting people to resources; (2) Being a great distributor of funding and resources; and (3) Championing local and regional economies.

6:15 PM: Facilitated Discussion on Scenarios for the Division's Future

IPA Senior Fellow Bill McGowan led participants in a facilitated discussion on scenarios for the Division's future.

Scenario 1 was discussed first, with participants expressing sentiments including the following:

- In the past, some attendees had bad experiences with DEDO in which they were passed from one person to another without getting an answer to their question. They hope implementing this scenario could fix this.
- Attendees felt this scenario would enable “one-stop-shopping” for resources, and that the Division would be able to connect people to resources and help people “map” out who they should talk to next.

Next, Scenario 2 was discussed. Sentiments such as the following were expressed:

- Participants felt that this scenario was too similar to previous economic development approaches.
- There were concerns this scenario would lead to a duplication of efforts, as the Division would not be the only source of capital in the state.
- This scenario would not provide businesses with necessary guidance as not every business needs or is ready for capital.

Comments on Scenario 3 included:

- Participants felt that this scenario would be beneficial in developing distinct opportunities for the State, such as strengthening the economy along the I-95 Corridor and developing an Ag-Tech industry in the Sussex County.
- Concerns were raised over the Division’s ability to implement this scenario, given their small staff size.
- Participants worried that arbitrarily assigning businesses or industries to a region could limit their access to resources.

Time was allotted for public comments but no one wished to speak.

8:00 PM: The Community Listening Session was adjourned.