

EDA University Center 2017-18 Work Plan

- I. **The Wisconsin Economy Series**
 - a. The Future of Manufacturing in Wisconsin (Tessa)
 - b. Finance (Tessa)
 - c. Interstate Migration—Understanding Talent Attraction and Retention in Wisconsin (Matt and Steve)
 - d. Declining Economic Dynamism—The Impact on Markets, Businesses, Jobs, and Workers (Tessa and Matt)
 - e. Rural Housing Supply, Affordability, and Quality—Implications for Communities, Labor, and Economic Development (Matt and Steve)
 - f. The Role of the University in Supporting Economic Development Across the Rural and Urban Continuum (Matt and Greg)

- II. **Program/Curriculum for Local Community & Economic Development Professionals**
 - a. Entrepreneurship for Opinion Leaders (Tessa and Kristin)
 - b. Sharing The Wisconsin Economy Series findings with local community and economic development appointed and elected officials (All)

- III. **Survey Research Initiative**
 - a. Wisconsin Residents Economic Survey Research Initiative (Kristin)

- IV. **Concept Proposal**
 - a. Quality of Life Indicators for Wisconsin Places (Greg and Steve)
 - b. Revising the Community Economic Analysis Program (Greg)

The Wisconsin Economy Series is the banner heading for current research topics. The general concept under the Wisconsin Economy Series banner is for EDA University Center research to on any given topic to take three forms: a research paper, a policy brief, and a fact sheet. In each case, the topic gets a less academic, more actionable treatment and a shorter, and graphically interesting format. The longer academic research papers that underpin the family of documents may in fact spawn more than one policy brief and multiple fact sheets. We expect that topics initially investigated may result in placing the research on hold for a number of reasons (when the data cannot be obtained, or the investigation shows the topic is sufficiently addressed or now mute).

Program/Curriculum for Local Community & Economic Development Professionals captures the University Center's interest in going beyond research papers, policy briefs, and fact sheets—creating a professional development and training opportunity for UW-Extension and Wisconsin Economic Development Association professionals. This concept is a specific curriculum that will be developed and delivered to UW-Extension community development local educators and economic development professionals.

Additionally, we intend to share the research findings from The Wisconsin Economy Series in order to create an awareness of the current economic reality that is influencing community and economic issues on the ground in Wisconsin. Our awareness education will be featured at existing gatherings of our target audiences (state UW-Extension meetings, WEDA-sponsored conferences, regional economic development organization meetings, and local government association venues).

Our **Wisconsin Residents Economic Survey Research Initiative** is intended to map the public opinion landscape surrounding the economy in the State of Wisconsin, while also gauging the degree to which media use, demographics, and personal predispositions are affecting public opinion of critical economic issues. Evidence suggests that the public in general is increasingly polarized in their use of news media which can affect individual perceptions related to the economy. Additionally, strongly partisan-driven news use may be related to trust of news media in general. There are concerns that public discourse over any issue, but particularly controversial issues, is more difficult in this type of high polarization/low trust media environment. The extent to which this is true of Wisconsin has strong implications for our ability to deliberate over economic issues and arrive at a bipartisan consensus at the citizen level that allows us to move forward with regards to economic development at a state level.

The **Concept Proposal** we are pursuing is focused on Quality of Life Indicators for Wisconsin Places. We are convinced that sustainable economic development is achieved when the economy, the environment, and social conditions are all strong. Indeed, we posit that communities that do not pay attention to holistic aspects of community life will not be competitive for business development, sustaining a robust civic life, and attracting residents and visitors. More than a *dashboard* or *best places ranking*, we are keen on identifying the variables that in sum capture quality of life and then to research what metrics most effectively measure strength in the community. We are keen on being able to use this research to compare Wisconsin to the nation, and regions (maybe counties and maybe individual communities) to one another within the state. We are seeking measures that can be used to track trends over time. We anticipate a periodic statewide report that might become a signature publication of the University Center. One of the purposes of a quality of life report for a region or place is so that they might have evidence to use to invest in shoring up weaknesses and so that they might be able to promote their strengths.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension's storied Community Economic Analysis (CEA) Program was launched in the early 1980s. While focused on jobs and income at the individual community level, it was clearly aimed at broadening a community's understanding of its assets, and its opportunities for influencing the economy in sustainable ways. We intend to revise this program consistent with the Quality of Life research—making it more about community development. Our hope is that we can offer a solid foundational strategic planning initiative that will become the Community Development Analysis Program to help communities to create a plan of action to further develop their strengths and enhance areas of promise. This program will be aimed at creating a resilient, thriving community for people to live, work, and play. The program will acknowledge that there are many aspects of our community that impact quality of life—including our economy, our environment, and social conditions.

Timeline—The University Center team intends to continue to use the spring, summer and early fall to further research these issues and begin to develop preliminary findings to be shared with the Advisory Group at the regular fall meeting (held in Elkhart Lake on the day prior to the September 27-29, 2017 WEDA Fall Governor's Conference on Economic Development). Responding to feedback, the research will be completed during the fall and early winter and shared with the Advisory Group at the regular winter session (held in February in Madison). We expect that at the fall meeting the Advisory Group might assign themselves to the Work Plan products of greatest interest and play a continuing role as peer reviewers.